

T H E
CARELESS HUSBAND.

A
C O M E D Y.

B Y
COLLEY CIBBER, Esq;

To which is prefixed,
The LIFE of the AUTHOR.

EDINBURGH:
Printed by and for MARTIN & WOTHERSPOON.

M. DCC. LXVIII.

CARELESS HUSBAND.

COMEDY.

COLLEY CIBBER, &c.

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

EDINBURGH:

Printed by James Ballantyne, at the Edinburgh Press.

1794.

In 2 vols.

indeed some reason to be proud of, since your Grace, from every circumstance, is able to divide the matter from the compliment.

The first critics have long and justly com-

plained that the confidence of most characters in our late comedies have been justly entertain-
ments for people of quality, especially the la-
dies; and therefore I was loath to hope, that

TO the Most ILLUSTRIOUS

J O H N,

DUKE and EARL of ARGYLL;

&c. &c. &c.

THIS play at last, through many difficul-
ties, has made way to throw itself at
your Grace's feet: and, considering what well-
meant attempts were made to intercept it in
its course to so great an honour, I have had
reason not to think it entirely successful, till
(where my ambition always designed it) I found
it safe in your protection: which, when sever-
al means had failed of making it less worthy
of, the spleen ended with the old good-nature
that was offered to my first play, viz. That it
was none of my own: but that's a praise I have

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indeed some reason to be proud of, since your Grace, from evincing circumstances, is able to divide the malice from the compliment.

The best critics have long and justly complained that the coarseness of most characters in our late comedies have been unfit entertainments for people of quality, especially the ladies; and therefore I was long in hopes, that some able pen (whose expectation did not hang upon the profits of success) would generously attempt to reform the town into a better taste than the world generally allows them: but nothing of that kind having lately appeared, that would give me an opportunity of being wise at another's expence, I found it impossible any longer to resist the secret temptation of my vanity, and so even struck the first blow myself: and the event has now convinced me, that whoever sticks closely to Nature, can't easily write above the understanding of the galleries, though at the same time he may possibly deserve applause of the boxes.

This play, before its trial on the stage, was examined by several people of quality, that came into your Grace's opinion of its being a just, a proper, and diverting attempt in comedy; but few of them carried the compliment beyond their private approbation; for, when I was wishing for a little farther hope, they stopped short of your Grace's penetration, and only

D E D I C A T I O N. v

Kindly wish'd me what they seem'd to fear, and
you assured me of, a general success.

But your Grace has been pleas'd, not only to
encourage me with your judgment, but have
likewise, by your favourable influence in the
bounties that were rais'd for me the third and
sixth day, defended me against any hazards of
an entire disappointment from so bold an un-
dertaking; and therefore, whatever the world
may think of me, as one they call a *Poet*, yet I
am confident, as your Grace understands me,
I shall not want your belief, when I assure you
that this *dedication* is the result of a profound
acknowledgment, an artless inclination, proud-
ly glad, and grateful.

And, if the dialogue of the following scenes
flows with more easy turn of thought and
spirit than what I have usually produced, I
shall not yet blame some people for saying it
is not my own, unless they knew, at the same
time, I owe most of it to the many stolen ob-
servations I have made from your Grace's man-
ner of conversing.

And, if ever the influence of your Grace's
more shining qualities should persuade me to
attempt a *tragedy*, I shall then, with the same
freedom, borrow all the ornamental virtues of
my hero, where now I only am indebted for
part of the fine gentleman. Greatness of birth

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and mind, sweetness of temper, flowing from the fixed and native principles of courage and of honour, are beauties that I reserve for a farther opportunity of expressing the zeal and gratitude of,

My Lord,

Your Grace's most obedient,

Most obliged, and humble Servant,

Decem. 15.

1704.

COLLEY CIBBER.

T H E
L I F E
O F
COLLEY CIBBER, Esq;

MR CIBBER was born on the 6th of November, O. S. 1671. in Southampton street, Covent-Garden.—His father, Caius Gabriel Cibber, was a native of Holstein, and came into England to follow his profession of a statuary sometime before the restoration of King Charles II.—The eminence he attained to in his art may be judged from the two celebrated images of Raging and Melancholy Madness on the two piers of the great gate of Bethlehem Hospital, and also by the basso relievo on the pedestal of that stupendous column called the *Monument*, erected in commemoration of the great fire of London in 1666.—His mother was the daughter of William Colley, Esq; of Glaiston in Rutlandshire, whose father, Sir Anthony Colley, by his steady attachment to the royal cause, during the troubles of King Charles I's reign, reduced his estate from three thousand, to about three hundred pounds *per ann.*—The family of the Colleys, though extinct by the death of our Laureat's uncle, Edward Colley, Esq; from whom our author received his Christian name, and who was the last heir-male of it, had been a very ancient one; it appearing from Wright's *History of Rutlandshire*, that they had been sheriffs and members of parliament from the reign of Henry VII. to the

latter end of King Charles I.—In 1682 he was sent to the free school of Grantham in Lincolnshire, where he staid till he got through it, from the lowest form to the uppermost; and such learning as that school could give him, is, as he himself acknowledges, the most he could pretend to. About 1689 he was taken from school to stand for the election of children into Winchester college; but having no farther interest or recommendation than that of his own naked merit, and the being descended by the mother's side from William of Wickham the founder, it is not to be wondered at that he was unsuccessful.—Rather pleased with what he looked on as a reprieve from the confined life of a school boy, than piqued at the loss of his election, he returned to London, and there even thus early conceived an inclination for the stage, which, however, he, on more considerations than one, thought proper to suppress; and therefore wrote down to his father, who was at that time employed at Chatsworth in Derbyshire, by the Earl (afterwards Duke) of Devonshire, in the raising that seat to the magnificence it has ever since possessed; to entreat of him that he might be sent as soon as possible to the university.—This request his father seemed very inclinable to comply with, and assured him in his answer, that as soon as his own leisure would permit, he would go with him to Cambridge, at which university he imagined he had more interest to settle him to advantage than at Oxford; but in the mean time sent for him down to Chatsworth, that he might in the interim be more immediately under his own eye.

Before young Cibber, however, could set out on his journey for that place, the Prince of Orange, (afterwards King William III.) had landed in the west; so that when our Author came to Nottingham, he found his father in arms there among the forces which the Earl of Devonshire had raised to aid that Prince.—The old man considering this as a very proper season for a young fellow to distinguish himself in, and being besides too far advanced in years to endure the fatigue

of a winter campaign, entreated the Earl of Devonshire to accept of this son in his room, which his Lordship not only consented to, but even promised, that when affairs were settled, he would farther provide for him.—Thus all at once was the current of our young hero's fortune entirely turned into a new channel; his thoughts of the university were smothered in ambition, and the intended academician converted, to his inexpressible delight, into a campaigner.

They had not been many days at Nottingham before they heard that Prince George of Denmark, with some other great persons, were gone off from the King to the Prince of Orange; and that the Princess Anne, fearing her father's resentment, in consequence of this step of her consort, had withdrawn herself from London in the night, and was then within half a day's journey of Nottingham; and moreover, that a thousand of the King's dragoons were in pursuit of her, in order to bring her back prisoner to London.—Although this last article was no more than a false alarm, being one of the stratagems made use of over the whole kingdom, in order to excite and animate the people to their common defence, yet it obliged the troops to scramble to arms in as much order as their consternation would admit of, to hasten to her assistance or rescue; but they had not advanced many miles on the London road, before they met the princess in a coach, attended only by Lady Churchill and Lady Fitzharding, whom they conducted through the acclamations of the people to Nottingham, where they were that night entertained at the charge of the Earl of Devonshire. On this occasion Mr Gibber being desired by his Lordship's *maitre d'hotel* to attend, the post assigned him was to observe what the Lady Churchill, afterwards Duchess of Marlborough, might call for, and from the manner in which he has made mention of that lady, it is apparent that her charms at that time made such an impression on his young heart, as, though the immense distance of her rank obliged, and

at the same time perhaps enabled him to suppress, yee even a course of fifty years, which passed between that period and the time of his writing his Apology, could not entirely efface.

From Nottingham the troops marched to Oxford, where the Prince and Princess of Denmark met.— Here the troops continued in quiet quarters till on the settling of the public tranquillity, when they were remanded back to Nottingham, and those who chose it were granted their discharge, among whom was our Author, who now quitted the field, and the hopes of military preferment, and returned to his father at Chatsworth. And now his expectations of future fortune, in a great measure, depended upon the promises of patronage he had received from the Earl of Devonshire, who, on being reminded of them, was so good as to desire his father to send him to London in the winter, when he would consider of some provision for him; and our Author, with equal honour and candour, acknowledges that it might well require time to consider it, for that it was then much harder to know what he was really fit for, than to have got him any thing he was not fit for. During his period of attendance on this nobleman, however, a frequent application to the amusements of the theatre awakened in him his passion for the stage, which he seemed now determined on pursuing as his *summum bonum*, and in spite of father, mother, or friends, to fix on as his *ne plus ultra*.

Previous, however, to our proceeding to the theatrical anecdotes of his life, it may be proper to mention one circumstance which, tho' it happened somewhat later than his first commencing actor, I cannot introduce with any chronological exactness without breaking into the thread of my narrative hereafter; yet which is an event constantly of importance in every man's history, and which he himself mentions as an instance of his discretion more desperate than that of preferring the stage to any views of life. This is no

other than his marriage, which he entered into before he was quite twenty-two years of age, merely on the plan of love, at a time when he himself informs us he had no more than twenty pounds a-year, which his father had assured to him, and twenty shillings *per* week from the theatre, which could not amount to above thirty pounds *per ann.* more. The lady he married was sister to John Shore, Esq; who for many years was serjeant-trumpet of England, to which gentleman, as Mr Cibber was one day paying a visit, his ear was charmed with the harmony of a female voice, accompanied by a finger which performed in a masterly manner on the harpsichord. Being informed, on an enquiry which an unusual curiosity urged him to make, that both the voice and hand belonged to the sister of his friend, he begged to be introduced, and at first sight was captivated with the view of every personal charm that could render a female amiable and attractive. Nor was she less delighted with the sprightliness of his wit, and the easy gaiety of his address. In short, a courtship quickly commenced on the foundation of a mutual passion, and terminated in a marriage contrary to the consent of the young lady's father, who, though he afterwards thought proper to give her some fortune, yet in the suddenness of his resentment put it out of his own power to bestow on her all that he had originally intended her, by appropriating great part of what he had so designed her, to the building of a little retirement on the Thames, which he called *Shore's Folly*, and which has been demolished for many years past.

But to proceed to his dramatic history. — It appears to have been about February 1689, when our Author first became a dangler about the theatre, where for some time he considered the privilege of every day seeing plays a sufficient consideration for the best of his services; so that he was full three quarters of a year before he was taken into a salary of ten shillings *per* week. The insufficiency of his voice, and the disad-

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vantages of a meagre uninformed person, were bars to his setting out as a hero; and all that seemed promising in him was an aptness of ear, and in consequence of that a justness in his manner of speaking. The parts he played were very trivial; that which he was first taken any considerable notice of being of no greater consequence than the Chaplain in the *Orphan*; and he himself informs us, that the commendations he received on that occasion from Goodman, a veteran of eminence on the stage, which he had at that time quitted, filled him with a transport which could scarcely be exceeded by those of Alexander or Charles XII. at the head of their victorious armies.—His next step to fame was in consequence of Queen Mary's having commanded the *Double Dealer* to be acted, when Mr Kynaston, who originally played *Lord Touchwood*, being so ill as to be entirely incapable of going on for it, Mr Cibber, on the recommendation of Congreve, the Author of the play, undertook the part, and at that very short notice performed it so well, that Mr Congreve not only paid him some very high compliments on it, but recommended him to an enlargement of salary from fifteen to twenty shillings *per week*. But even this success did not greatly elevate the rank of estimation in which he stood with the patentees as an actor; for on the opening of Drury-Lane Theatre in 1693, with the remainder of the old company, on the revolt of Betterton and several of the principal performers to Lincolns-Inn Fields, an occasional prologue which he had written, although acknowledged the best that had been offered, and very readily paid for, yet would not be admitted to an acceptance on any other terms than his absolutely relinquishing any claim to the speaking it himself.

Soon after his accepting of the part of *Fondlewife* in the *Old Batchelor* on a sudden emergency, in which, by the closest imitation of Dogget, who had been an original performer of it, not only in dress, but in voice and manner, he obtained an almost unbounded plaudis

from the audience, gave him some little flight of reputation; yet not only this, but even the applause which in the ensuing year he obtained, both as an author and actor, by his first comedy, called *Love's last Shift*, or, *The Fool in Fashion*, were insufficient to promote him to any considerable cast of parts, till the year 1696, when Sir John Vanbrugh did him a double honour, viz. first, by borrowing the hint of his comedy for the writing of his *Relapse*, by way of sequel to it; and, secondly, by fixing on him for the performance of his favourite character in it of *Lord Foppington*. In 1706, however, we find him considered by Mr Rich the patentee, as of some consequence, by his excepting him from the number of performers whom he permitted Mr Swiney to engage with for his theatre in the Haymarket, (though our Author, on finding himself slightly used by this manager, paid no regard to that exception, but joined Swiney); and in the ensuing year, when his friend Col. Brett obtained a fourth share in the patent, and that the performers formed a coalition and returned to Drury-Lane, Mr Cibber also conceded to the treaty, and returned with them; but on the silencing of the patent in 1709, he, together with Wilks, Dogget and Mrs Oldfield, went over again to Mr Swiney.

In 1711, he became united as joint patentee with Collier, Wilks and Dogget, in the management of Drury-Lane theatre; and afterwards in a like partnership with Booth, Wilks, and Sir Richard Steele. During this latter period, which continued till 1731, the English stage was perhaps in the most flourishing state it ever enjoyed. But the loss of Booth, Mrs Oldfield, Mrs Porter and Mr Wilks, lopping off its principal supports, Mr Cibber sold out his share of the patent, and retired from the public business of the stage, to which, however, he at a few particular periods occasionally returned, performing at no less a salary, as I have been informed, than fifty guineas *per* night; and in the year 1745, though upwards of seventy-four,

he appeared in the character of *Randolph* the pope's legate, in his own tragedy, called *Papal Tyranny*, which he performed, notwithstanding his advanced age, with great vigour and spirit.

What might perhaps be an additional inducement to this gentleman to leave the stage at the time he did, when, as he himself tells us, though it began to grow late in life with him, yet, still having health and strength enough to have been as useful on the stage as ever, he was under no visible necessity of quitting it, might be his having, in the year 1730, on the death of Mr Eusden, been promoted to the vacant laurel, the salary annexed to which, together with what he had saved from the emoluments of the theatre, and the sale of his share in the patent, set him above the necessity of continuing on it. And after a number of years passed in the utmost ease, gaiety and good-humour, he departed this life towards the latter end of the year 1757, having just compleated his 86th year.

Mr Cibber has, in his own *Apology for his Life*, drawn so open and candid a portrait of himself in every light in which we can have occasion to consider him, that I can by no means do more justice to his character, than by taking separately the several features of that portrait, to enable the reader to form an idea of him in the several points of view, of a *Man*, an *Actor*, and a *Writer*.

As a MAN, he has told us, that even from his school-days there was ever a degree of inconsistency in his disposition; that he was always in full spirits; in some small capacity to do right, but in a more frequent alacrity to do wrong; and consequently often under a worse character than he wholly deserved. A giddy negligence always possessed him, insomuch that he tells us he remembers having been once whipped for his theme, though his master told him, at the same time, that what was good of it was better than any boy's in the form. The same odd fate frequently attended the course of his latter conduct in life; for the indiscretion,

or at least unskilful openness with which he always acted, drew more ill-will towards him, than men of worse morals and more wit might have met with; whilst his ignorance and want of jealousy of mankind was so strong, that it was with reluctance he could be brought to believe any person he was acquainted with capable of envy, malice, or ingratitude. In short, a degree of vanity sufficient to keep him ever in temper with himself, blended with such a share of humility as made him sensible of his own follies, ready to acknowledge them, and as ready to laugh at them; a sprightly readiness of wit and repartee, which frequently enabled him to keep the laugh in his favour, with a fund of good-nature which was not to be ruffled when the jest happened to run against him; together with a great natural quickness of parts, and an intimate acquaintance with elegant and polite life, seem to be the principal materials of which his character was composed. Few men had more personal friends and admirers, and few men, perhaps, a greater number of undeserved enemies. A steady attachment to those revolution principles which he first set out with in life, though not pursued by him with virulence or offence to any one, created a party against him which almost constantly prevented his receiving those advantages from his writings, or that applause for his acting, which both justly merited. Yet, that the malevolence of his opponents had very little effect on his spleen, is apparent through the whole course of his disputes with Mr Pope, who, though a much superior writer with respect to sublimity and correctness, yet stood very little chance when obliged to encounter with the keenness of his raillery, and the easy unaffected nonchalance of his humour. In a word, he seemed most truly of Sir Harry Wildair's temper, whose spleen nothing could move but impossibilities. Nor did it seem within the power of even age and infirmity to get the better of this self-created happiness in his disposition; for even in the very latter years of his life I remember to have seen him,

when, amidst a circle of persons, not one of whom, perhaps, had attained to the third part of his age, yet has Mr Cibber, by his easy good humour, liveliness of conversation, and a peculiar happiness he had in telling a story, been apparently the very life of the company, and, but for the too evident marks of the hand of time on his features, might have been imagined the youngest man in it. Add to this, that besides these superficial *agreements*, he was possessed of great humanity, benevolence, and universal philanthropy, and by continued actions of charity, compassion and beneficence, ever bore the strongest testimonial to his being master of that brightest of all sublunary gems, a truly good heart.

As an ACTOR, nothing can surely be a stronger proof of his merit than the eminence which he attained to in that profession, in opposition to all the disadvantages which, by his own account, we find he had to struggle with: for, exclusive of the pains taken by many of his cotemporaries to keep him below the notice of the public, Nature seemed herself to oppose his advancement.

His person at first, though not ill made, was, he tells us, meagre and uninformed; (but this defect was probably soon amended, as he latterly had a figure of sufficient fulness and weight for any part); his complexion was pale and dismal, and his voice weak, thin, and inclining to the treble. His greatest advantages seem to have been those of a very accurate ear, and a critical judgment of nature. His chief excellency lay in the walk of fops, and feeble old men in comedy, in the former of which he does not appear ever to have been excelled in any period before him, or nearly equalled in any since. Yet it is apparent, that he frequently acted parts of consequence in tragedy, and those too, if not with the admiration, yet with the patient sufferance of the audience; and the rank of estimation he stood in with respect to the public in the opposed lights of a tragedian, and a comic performer,

cannot be better described than in his own words.—

“ I was vain enough to think,” says he, “ that I had
 “ more ways than one to come at applause, and that
 “ in the variety of characters I acted, the chances to
 “ win it were the strongest on my side.—That if the
 “ multitude were not in a roar to see me in Cardinal
 “ Wolsey, I could be sure of them in Alderman Foul-
 “ dlewife.—If they hated me in Iago, in Sir Fopling
 “ they took me for a fine gentleman.—If they were
 “ silent at Syphax, no Italian eunuch was more ap-
 “ plauded than when I sung in Sir Courtly.—If the
 “ morals of Æsop were too grave for them, Justice
 “ Shallow was as simple and as merry an old rake as
 “ the wisest of our young ones could wish me.—And
 “ though the terror and detestation raised by King
 “ Richard might be too severe a delight for them, yet
 “ the more gentle and modern vanities of a poet
 “ Bayes, or the well-bred vices of a Lord Foppington,
 “ were not at all more than their merry hearts, or
 “ nicer morals could bear.”

Though in this account, Mr Cibber has spoken with great moderation of himself, yet it is apparent that he must have had great merit in tragedy as well as comedy, since the impression he made on the audience was nearly the same in both : for as it is well known that his excellence in representing the fops, induced many to imagine him as great a coxcomb in real life as he appeared to be on the stage ; so he informs us, that from the delight he seemed to take in performing the villainous characters in tragedy, half his auditors were persuaded that a great share of the wickedness of them must have been in his own nature. But this he confesses that he looked on in the very light I mention it in this place, rather as a praise than a censure of his performance, since aversion in that case is nothing more than an hatred incurred for being like the thing one ought to be like.

The third and last view in which we are to consider him is that of a WRITER.—In this character he was

at times very severely handled by some of his contemporary critics; but by none with more harshness than Mr Pope. Party zeal, however, seems to have had a large share in exciting the opposition against him, as it is apparent, that when uninfluenced by prejudice, the audience has, through a course of upwards of sixty years, received great pleasure from many of his plays; which have constantly formed part of the entertainment of every season, and many of them repeatedly performed with that approbation they undoubtedly merit. The most important charge against him seems to have been, that his plots were not always his own; which reflection would have been just, had he produced no plays but such as he had altered from other authors; but in his first letter to Mr Pope he assures us, and with great truth, that his *Fool in Fashion* and *Careless Husband*, in particular, were as much (if not so valuable) originals, as any thing his antagonist had ever written. And in excuse for those which he did only alter, or indeed compile from others, it is evident that they were for the most part composed by collecting what little was good in perhaps several pieces which had had no success, and were laid aside as theatrical lumber. On this account he was frequently treated as a plagiarist; yet it is certain, that many of those plays which had been dead to the stage out of all memory, have, by his assisting hand, not only been restored to life, but have even continued ever since in full spirit and vigour. On this account, surely, the public and the original authors are greatly indebted to him; that sentiment of the poet being certainly true,

Chi trae l'uom del sepolcro, ed in vita lo serbo.
et colligitur et vivit cum non esset PETRARCH.

Nor have other writers been so violently attacked for the same fault. Mr Dryden thought it no diminution of his fame to take the same liberty with the *Tempest* and the *Troilus and Cressida* of Shakespeare. Nor do these altered plays, as Mr Cibber justly pleads, take

from the merit of those more successful pieces, which were entirely his own. A tailor that can make a new coat well, is not surely the worse workman because he can mend an old one; a cobbler may be allowed to be useful, though no one will contend for his being famous; nor is any man blameable for doing a little good, though he cannot do as much as another. Besides, Mr Cibber candidly declares, that whenever he took upon him to make some dormant play of an old author fit for the stage, it was honestly not to be idle that set him to work, as a good housewife will mend old linen when she has not better employment: but that, when he was more warmly engaged by a subject entirely new, he only thought it a good subject when it seemed worthy of an abler pen than his own, and might prove as useful to the hearer as profitable to himself. And indeed, this essential piece of merit must be granted to his own original plays, *viz.* that they always tend to the improvement of the mind, as well as the entertainment of the eye; that vice and folly, however pleasingly habited, are constantly lashed, ridiculed or reclaimed in them, and virtue as constantly rewarded.

There is an argument, indeed, which might be pleaded in favour of this Author, were his plays possessed of a much smaller share of merit than is to be found in them, which is, that he wrote, at least in the early part of his life, through necessity, for the support of his encreasing family; his precarious income as an actor being then too scanty to supply it with even the necessities of life: and with great pleasantry he acquaints us, that his muse and his spouse were equally prolific; that the one was seldom mother of a child, but in the same year the other made him the father of a play; and that they had had a dozen of each sort between them; of both which kinds some died in their infancy, and near an equal number of each were alive when he quitted the theatre. No wonder then, when the muse is only called upon by family duty, that she should not

always rejoice in the fruit of her labour. This excuse, I say, might be pleaded in Mr Cibber's favour; but I must confess myself of the opinion that there is no occasion for the plea; and that his plays have merit enough to speak their own cause, without the necessity of begging indulgence. His plots, whether original or borrowed, are lively and full of business, yet not confused in the action, nor bungled in the catastrophe. His characters are well drawn, and his dialogue easy, genteel and natural. And if he has not the intrinsic wit of a Congreve or a Vanbrugh, yet there is a luxuriance of fancy in his thoughts which gives an almost equal pleasure, and a purity in his sentiments and morals, the want of which in the above-named authors has so frequently and so justly been censured. In a word, I think the English stage more obliged to Mr Cibber for a fund of rational entertainment, than to any dramatic writer this nation has produced, Shakespear only excepted. And one unanswerable evidence has been borne to the satisfaction the public have received from his plays; and such an one as no author besides himself can boast, viz. that although the number of his dramatic pieces is very extensive, half of them at least are now, and seem likely to continue on the list of acting and favourite plays.

As a Writer, exclusive of the stage, his two Letters to Mr Pope, and his *Apology for his own Life*, are too well known, and too justly admired, to leave me any room to expatiate on their worth.

PROLOGUE.

OF all the various vices of the age,
And shoals of fools expos'd upon the stage,
How few are lash'd, that call for Satire's rage!
What can you think, to see our plays so full
Of madmen,coxcombs; and the driveling fool?
Of cits, of sharpers, rakes, and roaring bullies,
Of cheats, of cuckolds, aldermen, and cullies?
Wou'd not one swear 'twere taken for a rule,
That Satire's road in the dramatic school,
Was only meant for th' incorrigible fool?
As if too Vice and Folly were confu'd
To the vile scum alone of human kind;
Creatures a Muse should scorn! such abject trash
Deserve not Satire's but the hangman's lash.
Wretches so far shut out from sense of shame,
Newgate or Bedlam only should reclaim;
For Satire ne'er was meant to make wild monsters tame.
No, Sirs.—

We rather think the persons fit for plays;
Are they whose birth, and education says
They've every help, that should improve mankind,
Yet still live slaves to a vile tainted mind;
Such as in wit are often seen t' abound,
And yet have some weak part where folly's found:
For follies sprout, like weeds, bigbest in fruitful ground.
And 'tis observ'd, the garden of the mind,
To no infestive weeds so much inclin'd,
As the rank pride, that some from affectation find.
A folly too well known to make its court
With most success among the better sort.
Such are the persons we to-day provide,
And Nature's fools for once are laid aside.
This is the ground on which our play we build;
But in the structure must to judgment yield.
And where the poet fails in art or care,
We beg your wonted mercy to the player.

P R O L O G U E.

Upon the last CAMPAIGN.

Written by a person of Quality; designed for
the sixth day, but not spoken.

*A PAYING nation hates the fighting trade,
And lingering war in usual methods made:
When armies walk about from wood to river,
And threescore thousand only get together
To eat, and drink, consult, and find the way
How without fighting they may earn their pay;
When prudent generals get, by safeguard giving,
An honest, quiet, comfortable living;
But never fight it up to a thanksgiving.
These manage war with the physician's skill,
And use such means, as neither cure nor kill.
Like the wise doctors, safe by their degrees,
They give weak doses, but take swinging fees.
The trade continuing, which can never end,
While the sick state has any thing to spend.
Thanks then to him, who strikes at the disease,
And bravely tries to set the world at ease.
For if such fighting last but one year more,
Two Danube victories will quit the score,
And soon recruit our almost lavish'd store.
A happy peace regains our treasure lost,
Our own the glory, and our foes the cost.
No favour let the home-bred sparks expect;
But scorn from men, and from the fair neglect.
Beaux, that spend all their time in soft love-making;
These tender souls whose hearts are always aching,
Shun 'em, ye Fair, prevent their am'rous boasting;
Nor poorly yield to idle talk and boasting.*

*If you have favours, which you must bestow,
Give 'em the soldiers, they deserve 'em now;
Who make proud tyrants stoop, shou'd only kneel to you.*

*Minerva guides our general to fame,
No cruelties in war affect his name.*

Mild in the camp, by no success made vain;

A gentle goddess animates his mind;

Bold for his friends, to conquer'd foes as kind.

Design'd by Heav'n for Anna's happy reign;

Whose generous soul seeks only to restrain

Unbounded tyranny, and lawless might,

Revenge oppression, and restore the right.

War not her choice, but necessary fence,

Truth to promote, and humble insolence.

Where'er her influence flies, it joy creates,

And peace and safety brings to distant states.

With such success her chief begins his race,

That his first battle brightly does efface

The tedious labours of our modern wars;

Outdoes at once old soldiers and the tars.

In him no sauntering in the field we find,

No doubt remains where victory inclin'd.

His sword decides: no double praise is giv'n;

Where neither side is pleas'd, yet both thank Heav'n.

From war he kingdoms quickly will release;

Rapine and rage, soon turn to joy and peace,

And by destruction, make destruction cease.

Dramatis Personæ.

Lord MORELOVE.

Lord FOPPINGTON.

Sir CHARLES EASY.

Lady BETTY MODISH.

Lady EASY.

Lady GRAVEAIRE.

Mrs EDGING, woman to Lady Easy.

SCENE, WINDSOR.

T H E
CARELESS HUSBAND.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

SCENE, Sir CHARLES EASY's Lodgings.

Enter Lady EASY alone.

L. EASY.

WAS ever woman's spirit, by an injurious husband, broke like mine? A vile, licentious man! Must he bring home his follies too? wrong me with my very servant! O, how tedious a relief is patience! and yet in my condition 'tis the only remedy: for to reproach him with my wrongs, is taking on myself the means of a redress, bidding defiance to his falsehood, and naturally but provokes him to undo me. The uneasy thought of my continual jealousy may reaze him to a fix'd aversion; and hitherto, though he neglects, I cannot think he hates me.—It must be so; since I want power to please him, he never shall upbraid me with an attempt of making him uneasy.—My eyes and tongue shall yet be blind and silent to my wrongs; nor would I have him think my virtue could suspect him, 'till by some gross apparent proof of his misdoing, he forces me to see—and to forgive it.

Enter EDGING hastily.

Edg. O Madam!

L. Easy. What's the matter?

Edg. I have the strangest thing to shew your Ladyship—Such a discovery—

L. Easy. You are resolved to make it without much ceremony, I find. What's the business, pray?

Edg. The business, Madam, I have not patience to tell you; I am out of breath at the very thoughts on't; I shall not be able to speak this half hour.

L. Easy. Not to the purpose, I believe! but, methinks, you talk impertinently with a great deal of ease.

Edg. Nay, Madam, perhaps not so impertinent as your Ladyship thinks. There's that will speak to the purpose, I am sure——A base man!——

[Gives a letter.

L. Easy. What's this? an open letter! whence comes it?

Edg. Nay, read it, Madam, you'll soon guess.—— If these are the tricks of husbands, keep me—a maid still, say I.

L. Easy, looking on the superscription.] “To Sir Charles Easy.” Ha! too well I know this hateful hand!——O my heart! but I must veil my jealousy, which 'tis not fit this creature should suppose I am acquainted with. [*Aside.*]——This direction is to your master, how came you by it?

Edg. Why, Madam, as my master was lying down, after he came in from hunting, he sent me into his dressing room to fetch his snuff-box out of his waistcoat-pocket; and so, as I was searching for the box, Madam, there I found this wicked letter from a mistress; which I had no sooner read, but, I declare it, my very blood rose at him again: methought I could have torn him and her to pieces.

L. Easy. Intolerable! This odious thing's jealous of him herself, and wants me to join with her in a revenge upon him.——Sure I am fallen indeed! But 'twere to make me lower yet, to let her think I understand her. [*Aside.*

Edg. Nay, pray, Madam, read it, you'll be out of patience at it.

L. Easy. You are bold, mistress. Has my indulgence, or your master's good humour, flattered you

into the assurance of reading his letters? a liberty I never gave myself.—Here—lay it where you had it immediately—shou'd he know of your sauciness, 'twou'd not be my favour could protect you.

[Exit L. Easy.]

Edg. Your favour! marry come up! sure I don't depend upon your favour!—'tis not come to that, I hope.—Poor creature!—don't you think I am my master's mistress for nothing—you shall find, Madam, I won't be snapt up as I have been—not but it vexes me to think she shou'd not be as uneasy as I. I am sure he is a base man to me, and I cou'd cry my eyes out that she shou'd not think him as bad to her ev'ry joy. If I am wrong'd, sure she may very well expect it, that is but his wife.—A conceited thing!—she need not be so easy neither—I am as handsome as she, I hope.—Here's my master—I'll try whether I am to be huff'd by her or no. [Walks behind.]

Enter Sir CHARLES EASY.

Sir Char. So! the day is come again—Life but rises to another stage, and the same dull journey is before us—How like children do we judge of happiness! When I was stinted in my fortune, almost every thing was a pleasure to me: because most things then being out of my reach, I had always the pleasure of hoping for 'em; now Fortune's in my hand, she's as insipid as an old acquaintance—It's mighty silly, faith—just the same thing by my wife too; I am told she's extremely handsome—nay, and have heard a great many people say, she is certainly the best woman in the world—why, I don't know but she may, yet I could never find that her person or good qualities gave me any concern—In my eye the woman has no more charms than my mother.

Edg. Hum!—he takes no notice of me yet—I'll let him see I can take as little notice of him. [She walks by him gravely, he turns her about, and holds her, she struggles.] Pray, Sir.

Sir Char. A pretty pert air that——I'll humour it——What's the matter, child? are not you well? kiss me, hussy.

Edg. No, the duce fetch me if I do.

Sir Char. Has any thing put thee out of humour, Love?

Edg. No, Sir, 'tis not worth my being out of humour at——tho' if ever you have any thing to say to me again, I'll be burn'd.

Sir Char. Somebody has bely'd me to thee.

Edg. No, Sir, 'tis you have bely'd yourself to me——Did not I ask you, when you first made a fool of me, if you would be always constant to me, and did not you say, I might be sure you would? and here, instead of that, you are going on in your old intrigue with my Lady Graveairs.——

Sir Char. So.——

Edg. Beside, don't you suffer my Lady to huff me every day as if I were her dog, or had no more concern with you——I declare I won't bear it, and she sha'n't think to huff me——for ought I know, I am as agreeable as she; and tho' she dares not take any notice of your baseness to her, you sha'n't think to use me so——and so pray take your nasty letter——I know the hand well enough——for my part I won't stay in the family to be abused at this rate: I that have refused lords and dukes for your sake; I'd have you to know, Sir, I have had as many blue and green ribbons after me, for ought I know, as would have made me a falbala apron.

Sir Char. My Lady Graveairs! my nasty letter! and I won't stay in the family! death!——I'm in a pretty condition——What an unlimited privilege has this jade got from being a whore?

Edg. I suppose, Sir, you think to use every body as you do your wife.

Sir Char. My wife! hah! come hither, Mrs. Edging: hark you, drab. [Seizing her by the shoulder.

Edg. Oh!

Sir Char. When you speak of my wife, you are to

say your Lady, and you are never to speak of your Lady to me in any regard of her being my wife—for look you, child, you are not her strumpet, but mine; therefore I only give you leave to be saucy with me:—in the next place, you are never to suppose there is any such person as my Lady Graveairs; and lastly, my pretty one, how came you by this letter?

Edg. It's no matter, perhaps.

Sir Char. Ay, but if you shou'd not tell me quickly, how are you sure I won't take a great piece of flesh out of your shoulder?—my dear, [*Shakes her.*]

Edg. O lud! O lud! I will tell you, Sir.

Sir Char. Quickly then.— [*Again.*]

Edg. Oh! I took it out of your pocket, Sir.

Sir Char. When?

Edg. Oh! this morning, when you sent me for your snuff-box.

Sir Char. And your Ladyship's pretty curiosity has look'd it over, I presume—ha— [*Again.*]

Edg. O lud! dear Sir, don't be angry—indeed I'll never touch one again.

Sir Char. I don't believe you will, and I'll tell you how you shall be sure you never will.

Edg. Yes, Sir.

Sir Char. By stedfastly believing, that the next time you offer it, you'll have your pretty white neck twisted behind you.

Edg. Yes, Sir. [*Courtesying.*]

Sir Char. And you will be sure to remember every thing I have said to you?

Edg. Yes, Sir.

Sir Char. And now, child, I was not angry with your person, but your follies; which since I find you are a little sensible of—don't be wholly discourag'd—for I believe I—I shall have occasion for you again—

Edg. Yes, Sir.

Sir Char. In the mean time let me hear no more of your lady, child.

Edg. No, Sir.

Sir Char. Here she comes: begone.

Edg. Yes, Sir.—Oh ! I was never so frighten'd in my life. [Exit.]

Sir Char. So ! good discipline makes good soldiers : —It often puzzles me to think, from my own carelessness, and my wife's continual good-humour, whether she really knows any thing of the strength of my forces. —I'll lift her a little.

Enter Lady EASY.

My dear, how do you ? You are dress'd very early to-day : are you going out ?

L. Easy. Only to church, my dear.

Sir Char. Is it so late then ?

L. Easy. The bell has just rung.

Sir Char. Well, child, how does Windfor air agree with you ? Do you find yourself any better yet ? or have you a mind to go to London again ?

L. Easy. No, indeed, my dear ; the air's so very pleasant, that if it were a place of less company, I cou'd be content to end my days here.

Sir Char. Pr'ythee, my dear, what sort of company would most please you ?

L. Easy. When business would permit it, yours ; and in your absence a sincere friend, that were truly happy in an honest husband, to sit a chearful hour, and talk in mutual praise of our condition.

Sir Char. Are you then really very happy, my dear ?

L. Easy. Why should you question it ? [Smiling on him.]

Sir Char. Because I fancy I am not so good to you as I should be.

L. Easy. Pshaw !

Sir Char. Nay, the duce take me if I don't really confess myself so bad, that I have often wonder'd how any woman of your sense, rank and person, could think it worth her while to have so many useless good qualities.

L. Easy. Fy, my dear.

Sir Char. By my soul, I'm serious.

L. Easy. I can't boast of my good qualities ; nor, if I could, do I believe you think 'em useless.

Act I. The CARELESS HUSBAND. 31

Sir Char. Nay, I submit to you—— Don't you find 'em so? Do you perceive that I am one tittle the better husband for your being so good a wife?

L. Easy. Pshaw! you jest with me.

Sir Char. Upon my life I don't—— Tell me truly, was you never jealous of me?

L. Easy. Did I ever give you any sign of it?

Sir Char. Um——that's true—but do you really think I never gave you occasion?

L. Easy. That's an odd question:—but suppose you had?

Sir Char. Why then, what good has your virtue done you, since all the good qualities of it could not keep me to yourself?

L. Easy. What occasion have you given me to suppose I have not kept you to myself?

Sir Char. I given you occasion?—fy! my dear—you may be sure—I——look you, that is not the thing, but still a—— (death, what a blunder have I made!)—a still, I say, Madam, you shan't make me believe you have never been jealous of me, nor that you ever had any real cause; but I know women of your principles have more pride than those that have no principles at all; and where there is pride there must be some jealousy—so that if you are jealous, my dear, you know you wrong me, and——

L. Easy. Why then, upon my word, my dear I don't know that ever I wronged you that way in my life.

Sir Char. But suppose I had given a real cause to be jealous, how would you do then?

L. Easy. It must be a very substantial one that makes me jealous.

Sir Char. Say it were a substantial one; suppose now I were well with a woman of your own acquaintance, that under pretence of frequent visits to you, should only come to carry on an affair with me—suppose now my Lady Graveairs and I were great?——

L. Easy. Wou'd I could not suppose it! [Aside.]

Sir Char. If I come off here I believe I am pretty safe. [Aside.]——Suppose, I say, my Lady and I

were so very familiar, that not only yourself, but half the town should see it!

L. Easy. Then I should cry myself sick in some dark closet, and forget my tears when you spoke kindly to me.

Sir Char. The most convenient piece of virtue sure that ever wife was mistress of. [*Aside.*]

L. Easy. But pray, my dear, did you ever think that I had any ill thoughts of my Lady Graveairs?

Sir Char. O fy! child; only you know she and I us'd to be a little free sometimes, so I had a mind to see if you thought there was any harm in it: but since I find you very easy, I think myself oblig'd to tell you, that upon my soul, my dear, I have so little regard to her person, that the duce take me if I would not as soon have an affair with thy own woman.

L. Easy. Indeed, my dear, I should as soon suspect you with one as t' other.

Sir Char. Poor dear—shouldst thou?—give me a kiss.

L. Easy. Pshaw! you don't care to kiss me.

Sir Char. By my soul I do——I wish I may die if I don't think you a very fine woman.

L. Easy. I only wish you wou'd think me a good wife. [*Kisses her.*] But pray, my dear, what has made you so strangely inquisitive?

Sir Char. Inquisitive—why—a—I don't know, one's always saying one foolish thing or another—toll le roll. [*Sings and talks.*] My dear, what! are we never to have any ball here? Toll le roll. I fancy I could recover my dancing again, if I would but practise. Toll loll loll!

L. Easy. This excess of carelessness to me excuses half his vices: if I can make him once think seriously—Time yet may be my friend. [*Aside.*]

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. Sir, Lord Morelove gives his service——

Sir Char. Lord Morelove! where is he?

Serv. At the chocolate-house; he call'd me to him as I went by, and bid me tell your Honour he'll wait upon you presently.

L. Easy. I thought you had not expected him here again this season, my dear.

Sir Char. I thought so too; but you see there's no depending upon the resolution of a man that's in love.

L. Easy. Is there a chair?

Serv. Yes, Madam. [Exit Servant.]

L. Easy. I suppose Lady Betty Modish has drawn him hither.

Sir Char. Ay, poor soul, for all his bravery, I am afraid so.

L. Easy. Well, my dear, I han't time to ask my Lord how he does now; you'll excuse me to him, but I hope you'll make him dine with us.

Sir Char. I'll ask him. If you see Lady Betty at prayers, make her dine too, but don't take any notice of my Lord's being in town.

L. Easy. Very well! if I should not meet her there, I'll call at her lodgings.

Sir Char. Do so.

L. Easy. My dear, your servant. [Exit L. Easy.]

Sir Char. My dear, I'm yours. Well! one way or other this woman will certainly bring about her business with me at last; for tho' she can't make me happy in her own person, she lets me be so intolerably easy with the women that can, that she has at least brought me into a fair way of being as weary of them too.

Enter SERVANT and Lord MORELOVE.

Serv. Sir, my Lord's come.

L. Mor. Dear Charles!

Sir Char. My dear Lord! this is an happiness undreamt of; I little thought to have seen you at Windfor again this season; I concluded of course, that books and solitude had secur'd you till winter.

L. Mor. Nay, I did not think of coming myself; but I found myself not very well in London, so I thought—a little hunting, and this air——

Sir Char. Ha! ha! ha!

L. Mor. What do you laugh at?

Sir Char. Only because you should not go on with

your story: if you did but see how silly a man fumbles for an excuse, when he's a little aſham'd of being in love, you would not wonder what I laugh at, ha! ha!

L. Mor. Thou art a very happy fellow—nothing touches thee—always eaſy—Then you conclude I follow Lady Betty again.

Sir Char. Yes, faith do I: and to make you eaſy, my Lord, I cannot ſee why a man that can ride fifty miles after a poor ſtag, ſhould be aſham'd of running twenty in chace of a fine woman, that in all probability will make him ſo much the better ſport too.

[*Embracing.*]

L. Mor. Dear Charles, don't flatter my diſtemper. I own I ſtill follow her. Do you think her charms have power to excuſe me to the world?

Sir Char. Ay! ay! a fine woman's an excuſe for any thing; and the ſcandal of our being in jeſt, is a jeſt itſelf: we are all forc'd to be their fools, before we can be their favourites.

L. Mor. You are willing to give me hope, but I can't believe ſhe has the leaſt degree of inclination for me.

Sir Char. I don't know that—I'm ſure her pride likes you, and that's generally your fine lady's darling paſſion.

L. Mor. Do you ſuppoſe, if I could grow indifferent, it wou'd touch her?

Sir Char. Sting her to the heart.—Will you take my advice?

L. Mor. I have no relief but that. Had I not thee now and then to talk an hour, my life were inſupportable.

Sir Char. I am ſorry for that, my Lord—but mind what I ſay to you.—But hold, firſt let me know the particulars of your late quarrel with her.

L. Mor. Why—about three weeks ago, when I was laſt here at Windſor, ſhe had for ſome days treated me with a little more reſerve, and another with more freedom than I found myſelf eaſy at.

Sir Char. Who was that other?

L. Mor. One of my Lord Foppington's gang, the pert coxcomb that's juſt come to a ſmall eſtate, and a great

periwig—he that sings himself among the women—What d'ye call him—He won't speak to a commoner when a lord's in company—You always see him with a cane dangling at his button, his breast open, no gloves, one eye tuck'd under his hat, and a tooth-pick—Startup, that's his name.

Sir Char. O! I have met him in a visit—but pray go on.

L. Mor. So, disputing with her about the conduct of women, I took the liberty to tell her how far I thought she err'd in hers: she told me I was rude, and that she would never believe any man could love a woman, that thought her in the wrong in any thing she had a mind to, at least if he dar'd to tell her so—This provok'd me into her whole character, with as much spite and civil malice, as I have seen her bestow upon a woman of true beauty, when the men first roasted her; so in the middle of my wisdom, she told me, she desired to be alone, that I would take my odious proud heart along with me, and trouble her no more.—I—bow'd very low, and as I left the room, vow'd I never wou'd, and that my proud heart should never be humbled by the outside of a fine woman.—About an hour after, I whipp'd into my chaise for London, and have never seen her since.

Sir Char. Very well, and how did you find your proud heart by that time you got to Honflow?

L. Mor. I am almost ashamed to tell you—I found her so much in the right, that I curs'd my pride for contradicting her at all, and began to think according to her maxim, That no woman could be in the wrong to a man that she had in her power.

Sir Char. Ha! ha! Well, I'll tell you what you shall do. You can see her without trembling, I hope?

L. Mor. Not if she receives me well.

Sir Char. If she receives you well, you will have no occasion for what I am going to say to you.—First, you shall dine with her.

L. Mor. How! where! when!

Sir Char. Here! here! at two o'clock.

L. Mor. Dear Charles!

Sir Char. My wife's gone to invite her. When you see her first, be neither too humble nor too stubborn; let her see, by the ease in your behaviour, you are still pleas'd in being near her, while she is upon reasonable terms with you. This will either open the door of an eclairsissement, or quite shut it against you—and if she is still resolved to keep you out—

L. Mor. Nay, if she insults me then, perhaps I may recover pride enough to rally her by an overacted submission.

Sir Char. Why, you improve, my Lord; this is the very thing I was going to propose to you.

L. Mor. Was it, faith! Hark you, dare you stand by me?

Sir Char. Dare I! ay, to my last drop of assurance, against all the insolent airs of the proudest beauty in Christendom.

L. Mor. Nay, then defiance to her!—We two—Thou hast inspir'd me, I find myself as valiant as a flatter'd coward.

Sir Char. Courage, my Lord—I'll warrant we beat her.

L. Mor. My blood stirs at the very thought on't; I long to be engag'd.

Sir Char. She'll certainly give ground, when she once sees you are thoroughly provok'd.

L. Mor. Dear Charles, thou art a friend indeed.

Enter a SERVANT.

Serv. Sir, my Lord Foppington gives his service, and if your Honour's at leisure, he'll wait on you as soon as he's dress'd.

L. Mor. Lord Foppington! is he in town?

Sir Char. Yes—I heard last night he was come. Give my service to his Lordship, and tell him I shall be glad he'll do me the honour of his company here at dinner. [*Exit Serv.*] We may have occasion for him in our design upon Lady Betty.

L. Mor. What use can we make of him?

Sir Char. We'll see when he comes; at least there's no danger in him; not but I suppose you know he's your rival.

L. Mor. Plhaw ! a coxcomb.

Sir Char. Nay, don't despise him neither—he's able to give you advice ; for tho' he's in love with the same woman, yet to him she has not charms enough to give a minute's pain.

L. Mor. Pr'ythee what sence has he of love ?

Sir Char. Faith very near as much as a man of sence ought to have ; I grant you he knows not how to value a woman truly deserving, but he has a pretty just esteem for most ladies about town.

L. Mor. That he follows, I grant you—for he seldom visits any of extraordinary reputation.

Sir Char. Have a care ; I have seen him at Lady Betty Modish's.

L. Mor. To be laugh'd at.

Sir Char. Don't be too confident of that ; the women now begin to laugh with him, not at him : for he really sometimes rallies his own humour with so much ease and pleasantry, that a great many women begin to think he has no follies at all ; and those he has, have been as much owing to his youth, and a great estate, as want of natural wit. 'Tis true, he's often a bubble to his pleasures, but he has always been wisely vain enough to keep himself from being too much the ladies humble servant in love.

L. Mor. There indeed I almost envy him.

Sir Char. The easiness of his opinion upon the sex will go near to pique you—We must have him.

L. Mor. As you please.—But what shall we do with ourselves till dinner ?

Sir Char. What think you of a party at piquet ?

L. Mor. O ! you are too hard for me.

Sir Char. Fy ! fy ! what ! when you play with his Grace ?

L. Mor. Upon my soul he gives me three points.

Sir Char. Does he ? why then you shall give me but two—Here, fellow, get cards. *Allons.* [Exit.

ACT II. SCENE I.

*Lady Betty Modish's Lodgings.**Enter Lady BETTY, and Lady EASY, meeting.*

L. BETTY.

O H! my dear! I am overjoy'd to see you! I am strangely happy to-day; I have just received my new scarf from London, and you are most critically come to give me your opinion of it.

L. Easy. O! your servant Madam, I am a very indifferent judge, you know: what, is it with sleeves?

L. Bet. O! 'tis impossible to tell you what it is!—'tis all extravagance both in mode and fancy, my dear. I believe there's six thousand yards of edging in it—Then such an enchanting sloop from the elbow—something so new, so lively, so noble, so coquet and charming!—but you shall see it, my dear—

L. Easy. Indeed I won't, my dear, I am resolv'd to mortify you, for being so wrongfully fond of a trifle.

L. Bet. Nay, now, my dear, you are ill-natur'd.

L. Easy. Why truly, I'm half angry to see a woman of your sense, so warmly concern'd in the care of her outside; for when we have taken our best pains about it, 'tis the beauty of the mind alone that gives us lasting value.

L. Bet. Ah! my dear, my dear! you have been a married woman to a fine purpose indeed, that know so little of the taste of mankind: take my word, a new fashion upon a fine woman, is often a greater proof of her value than you are aware of.

L. Easy. That I can't comprehend, for you see among the men nothing's more ridiculous than a new fashion. Those of the first sense are always the last that come into 'em?

L. Bet. That is, because the only merit of a man is his sense; but doubtless the greatest value of a woman

is her beauty. An homely woman at the head of a fashion, would not be allowed in it by the men, and consequently not follow'd by the women: so that to be successful in one's fancy, is an evident sign of one's being admir'd, and I always take admiration for the best proof of beauty, and beauty certainly is the source of power, as power in all creatures is the height of happiness.

L. Easy. At this rate you would rather be thought beautiful than good.

L. Bet. As I had rather command than obey: the wisest homely woman can't make a man of sense of a fool, but the veriest fool of a beauty shall make an ass of a statesman; so that, in short, I can't see a woman of spirit has any business in this world but to dress—and make the men like her.

L. Easy. Do you suppose this is a principle the men of sense will admire you for?

L. Bet. I do suppose, that when I suffer any man to like my person, he shan't dare to find fault with my principle.

L. Easy. But men of sense are not so easily humbled.

L. Bet. The easiest of any; one has ten thousand times the trouble with a coxcomb.

L. Easy. Nay, that may be; for I have seen you throw away more good humour in hopes of a *tendresse* from my Lord Foppington, who loves all women alike, than would have made my Lord Morelove perfectly happy, who loves only you.

L. Bet. The men of sense, my dear, make the best fools in the world: their sincerity and good breeding throws them so entirely into one's power, and gives one such an agreeable thirst of using them ill, to shew that power—'tis impossible not to quench it.

L. Easy. But methinks my Lord Morelove's manner to you might move any woman to a kinder sense of his merit.

L. Bet. Ay! but would it not be hard, my dear, for a poor weak woman to have a man of his quality and reputation in her power, and not let the world see him

there? wou'd any creature sit new-dress'd all day in her closet? cou'd you bear to have a sweet-fancy'd suit, and never shew it at the play, or the drawing-room?

L. Easy. But one wou'd not ride in't, methinks, or harass it out, when there's no occasion.

L. Bet. Pooh! my Lord Morelove's a meer Indian d-mask, one can't wear him out; o' my conscience I must give him to my woman at last; I begin to be known by him: had not I best leave him off, my dear? for (poor soul!) I believe I have a little fretted him of late.

L. Easy. Now 'tis to me amazing, how a man of his spirit can bear to be us'd like a dog for four or five years together!—but nothing's a wonder in love; yet pray, when you found you cou'd not like him at first; why did you ever encourage him?

L. Bet. Why, what wou'd you have one do? for my part, I cou'd no more chuse a man by my eye than a shoe; one must draw 'em on a little, to see if they are right to one's foot.

L. Easy. But I'd no more fool on with a man I cou'd not like, than I'd wear a shoe that pinch'd me.

L. Bet. Ay, but then a poor wretch tells one, he'll widen 'em, or do any thing, and is so civil and silly; that one does not know how to turn such a trifle, as a pair of shoes or an heart, upon a fellow's hands again.

L. Easy. Well! I confess you are very happily distinguish'd among most women of fortune, to have a man of my Lord Morelove's sense and quality so long and honourably in love with you: for now-a-days one hardly ever hears of such a thing as a man of quality in love with the woman he would marry: to be in love now, is only having a design upon a woman, a modish way of declaring war against her virtue, which they generally attack first, by toasting up her vanity.

L. Bet. Ay, but the world knows, that is not the case between my Lord and me.

L. Easy. Therefore I think you happy.

L. Bet. Now I don't see it: I'll swear I'm better pleas'd to know there are a great many foolish fellows of quality, that take occasion to toast me frequently.

L. Easy. I vow I shou'd not thank any gentleman for toasting me; and I have often wonder'd how a woman of your spirit cou'd bear a great many other freedoms I have seen some men take with you.

L. Bet. As how, my dear? come pr'ythee be free with me; for you must know, I love dearly to hear my faults—Who is't you have observ'd to be too free with me?

L. Easy. Why, there's my Lord Foppington; cou'd any woman but you bear to see him with a respectful steer stare full in her face, draw up his breath, and cry—gad, you're handsome?

L. Bet. My dear, fine fruit will have flies about it, but, poor things, they do it no harm: for, if you observe, people are generally most apt to chuse that the flies have been busy with, ha! ha!

L. Easy. Thou art a strange giddy creature.

L. Bet. That may be from so much circulation of thought, my dear.

L. Easy. But my Lord Foppington's married, and one wou'd not fool with him for his lady's sake; it may make her uneasy, and——

L. Bet. Poor creature! her pride indeed makes her carry it off without taking any notice of it to me; tho' I know she hates me in her heart, and I can't endure malicious people, so I us'd to dine with her once a-week, purely to give her disorder; if you had but seen when my Lord and I fool'd a little, the creature look'd so ugly!

L. Easy. But I should not think my reputation safe; my Lord Foppington's a man that talks often of his amours, but seldom speaks of favours that are refus'd him.

L. Bet. Pshaw! will any thing a man says, make a woman less agreeable? Will his talking spoil one's complexion, or put one's hair out of order?—and for reputation, look yon, my dear, take it for a rule, that, as amongst the lower rank of people, no woman wants beauty that has fortune; so, amongst people of fortune, no woman wants virtue that has beauty: but an estate and beauty join'd, are of an unlimited, nay, a power pontifical; make one not only absolute, but

infallible.—A fine woman's never in the wrong, or, if she were, it is not the strength of a poor creature's reason that can unfetter him.—O! how I love to hear a wretch curse himself for loving on, or now and then coming out with a—

“ Yet, for the plague of human race,

“ This devil has an angel's face.”

L. Easy. At this rate, I don't see you allow reputation to be at all essential to a fine woman.

L. Bet. Just as much as honour to a great man. Power always is above scandal: don't you hear people say, the King of France owes most of his conquests to breaking his word? and would not the Confederates have a fine time on't, if they were only to go to war with reproaches? Indeed, my dear, that jewel reputation is a very fanciful business! one shall not see an homely creature in town, but wears it in her mouth as monstrously as the Indians do bobs at their lips, and it really becomes them just alike.

L. Easy. Have a care, my dear, of trusting too far to power alone: for nothing is more ridiculous than the fall of pride; and woman's pride at best may be suspected to be more a distrust, than a real contempt of mankind: for when we have said all we can, a deserving husband is certainly our best happiness; and I don't question but my Lord Morelove's merit, in a little time, will make you think so too; for whatever airs you give yourself to the world, I'm sure your heart don't want good-nature.

L. Bet. You are mistaken, I am very ill-natur'd, tho' your good-humour won't let you see it.

L. Easy. Then, to give me a proof on't, let me see you refuse to go immediately and dine with me, after I have promis'd Sir Charles to bring you.

L. Bet. Pray don't ask me.

L. Easy. Why?

L. Bet. Because, to let you see I hate good-nature, I'll go without asking, that you mayn't have the malice to say I did you a favour.

L. Easy. Thou art a mad creature. [*Exit arm and arm.*]

ACT II. THE CARELESS HUSBAND.

43

The SCENE changes to Sir CHARLES's lodgings.

Lord MORELOVE and Sir CHARLES at piquet.

Sir Char. Come, my Lord, one single game for the tout, and so have done.

L. Mor. No, hang 'em, I have enough of 'em; ill cards are the dullest company in the world—How much is it?

Sir Char. Three parties.

L. Mor. Fifteen pound—very well.

[While L. Morelove counts out his money, a servant gives

Sir Charles a letter, which he reads to himself.]

Sir Char. *[to the Servant.]* Give my service, say I have company dines with me; if I have time, I'll call there in the afternoon—ha! ha! ha! *[Exit Serv.]*

L. Mor. What's the matter?—There—

[Paying the money.]

Sir Char. The old affair—my Lady Graveairs.

L. Mor. O! pr'ythee how does that go on?

Sir Char. As agreeably as a chancery suit; for now it's come to the intolerable plague of my not being able to get rid on't; as you may see— *[Giving the letter.]*

L. Mor. *[Reads.]* “Your behaviour since I came to

“Windfor, has convinc'd me of your villainy, with,

“out my being surpriz'd, or angry at it: I desire

“you would let me see you at my lodgings imme-

“diately, where I shall have a better opportunity

“to convince you, that I never can, or positively

“will be as I have been, Yours, &c.

A very whimsical letter!—Faith, I think, she has hard luck with you; if a man were obliged to have a mistress, her person and condition seem to be cut out for the ease of a lover: for she's a young, handsome, wild, well jointer'd widow.——But what's your quarrel?

Sir Char. Nothing:—she sees the coolness happens to be first on my side, and her business with me now, I suppose, is to convince me how heartily she's vex'd that she was not beforehand with me.

L. Mor. Her pride and your indifference must occasion a pleasant scene sure. What do you intend to do?

Sir Char. Treat her with a cold familiar air, till I

pique her to forbid me her sight, and then take her at her word.

L. Mor. Very gallant and provoking.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Sir, my Lord Foppington—— [Exit.

Sir Char. O—now, my Lord, if you have a mind to be let into the mystery of making love without pain—here's one that's a master of the art, and shall declaim to you——

Enter Lord FOPPINGTON.

My dear Lord Foppington!

L. Fop. My dear agreeable! *Qua je t'embrasse! Pardi! Il y a cent ans que je ne te vu.*—My Lord, I am your Lordship's most obedient humble servant.

L. Mor. My Lord, I kiss your hands—I hope we shall have you here some time; you seem to have laid in a stock of health to be in at the diversions of the place—You look extremely well.

L. Fop. To see one's friend look so, my Lord, may easily give a *vermeile* to one's complexion.

Sir Char. Lovers in hope, my Lord, always have a visible *brilliant* in their eyes and air.

L. Fop. What dost thou mean, Charles?

Sir Char. Come, come, confess what really brought you to Windsor, now you have no business there.

L. Fop. Why, two hours, and six of the best nags in Christendom, or the devil drive me.

L. Mor. You make haste, my Lord.

L. Fop. My Lord, I always fly when I pursue—But they are well kept indeed—I love to have creatures go as I bid 'em; you have seen 'em, Charles, but so has all the world; Foppington's long tails are known in every road in England.

Sir Char. Well, my Lord; but how came they to bring you this road? You don't use to take these irregular jaunts without some design in your head of having more than nothing to do.

L. Fop. Pshaw! pox! pr'ythee, Charles, thou know'st I am a fellow *sans consequence*, be where I will.

Sir Char. Nay, nay, this is too much among friends, my Lord; come, come,—we must have it, your real business here.

L. Fop. Why then, *entre nous*, there is a certain *fille de joye* about the court here that loves winning at cards better than all the fine things I have been able to say to her:—so I have brought an odd thousand bill in my pocket, that I design, *à la fois*, to play off with her at piquet, or so; and now the business is out.

Sir Char. Ah! and a very good business too, my Lord.

L. Fop. If it be well done, Charles—

Sir Char. That's as you manage your cards, my Lord.

L. Mor. This must be a woman of consequence, by the value you set upon her favours.

Sir Char. O! nothing's above the price of a fine woman.

L. Fop. Nay, look you, gentlemen, the price may not happen to be altogether so high neither;—for I fancy I know enough of the game, to make it but an even bet, I get her for nothing.

L. Mor. How so, my Lord?

L. Fop. Because, if she happen to lose a good sum to me, I shall buy her with her own money.

L. Mor. That's new, I confess.

L. Fop. You know, Charles, 'tis not impossible but I may be five hundred pounds deep with her—then bills may fall short, and the devil's in't if I want assurance to ask her to pay me some way or other.

Sir Char. And a man must be a churl; indeed, that won't take a Lady's personal security; hah! hah! hah!

L. Fop. Heh! heh! heh! thou art a devil, Charles.

L. Mor. Death! how happy is this coxcomb? [*Aside*].

L. Fop. But to tell you the truth, gentlemen,—I had another pressing temptation that brought me hither, which was—my wife.

L. Mor. That's kind, indeed; my Lady has been here this month, she'll be glad to see you.

L. Fop. That I don't know; for I design this afternoon to send her to London.

L. Mor. What! the same day you come, my Lord? that would be cruel.

L. Fop. Ay, but it will be mighty convenient; for she is positively of no manner of use in my amours.

L. Mor. That's your fault, the town thinks her a very deserving woman.

L. Fop. If she were a woman of the town, perhaps I shou'd think so too; but she happens to be my wife, and when a wife is once given to deserve more than her husband's inclinations can pay, in my mind she has no merit at all.

L. Mor. She's extremely well-bred, and of a very prudent conduct.

L. Fop. Um—ay—the woman's proud enough.

L. Mor. Add to this, all the world allows her handsome.

L. Fop. The world's extremely civil, my Lord; and I should take it as a favour done to me, if they could find an expedient to unmarry the poor woman from the only man in the world that can't think her handsome.

L. Mor. I believe there are a great many in the world that are sorry 'tis not in their power to unmarry her.

L. Fop. I am a great many in the world's very humble servant; and whenever they find 'tis in their power, their high and mighty wisdoms may command me at a quarter of an hour's warning.

L. Mor. Pray, my Lord, what did you marry for?

L. Fop. To pay my debts at play, and disinheret my younger brother.

L. Mor. But there are some things due to a wife.

L. Fop. And there are some debts I don't care to pay:—to both which I plead husband, and my Lord.

L. Mor. If I should do so, I shou'd expect to have my own coach stopt in the street, and to meet my wife with the windows up in a hackney.

L. Fop. Then wou'd I put in bail, and order a separate maintenance.

L. Mor. So pay double the sum of the debt, and be marry'd for nothing.

L. Fop. Now I think deferring a dun, and getting rid of one's wife, are two the most agreeable sweets in the liberties of an English subject.

L. Mor. If I were married, I wou'd as soon part from my estate, as my wife.

L. Fop. Now I wou'd not, sun burn me if I wou'd.

L. Mor. Death! but since you are thus indifferent, my Lord, why would you needs marry a woman of so much merit? Cou'd not you have laid out your spleen upon some ill-natur'd shrew, that wanted the plague of an ill husband, and have let her alone to some plain, honest man of quality that would have deserv'd her.

L. Fop. Why, faith, my Lord, that might have been considered; but I really grew so passionately fond of her fortune, that, curse catch me, I was quite blind to the rest of her good qualities: for, to tell you the truth, if it had been possible the old put of a peer cou'd have toss'd me in t'other five thousand for 'em, by my consent, she shou'd have relinquisht her merit and virtues to any of her younger sisters.

Sir Char. Ay, ay, my Lord, virtues in a wife are good for nothing but to make her proud, and put the world in mind of her husband's faults.

L. Fop. Right, Charles: and, strike me blind, but the women of virtue are now grown such idiots in love, they expect of a man, just as they do of a coach-horse, that one's appetite, like t'other's flesh, should increase by feeding.

Sir Char. Right, my Lord, and don't consider, that *toutjours chapous bouilles* will never do with an English stomach.

L. Fop. Ha! ha! ha! To tell you the truth, Charles, I have known so much of that sort of eating that I now think, for an hearty meal, no wild fowl in Europe is comparable to a joint of Banstead mutton.

L. Mor. How do you mean?

L. Fop. Why, that for my part, I had rather have a plain slice of my wife's woman, than my guts full of e'er an Orrolian duchess in Christendom.

L. Mor. But I thought, my Lord, your chief business now at Windsor had been your design upon a woman of quality.

L. Fop. That's true, my Lord: tho' I don't think your fine lady the best dish myself, yet a man of quality can't be without such things at his table.

L. Mor. O! then you only desire the reputation of an affair with her.

L. Fop. I think the reputation is the most inviting part of an amour with most women of quality.

L. Mor. Why so, my Lord?

L. Fop. Why, who the devil would run through all the degrees of form and ceremony, that lead one up to the last favour, if it were not for the reputation of understanding the nearest way to get over the difficulty?

L. Mor. But, my Lord, does not the reputation of your being so general an undertaker frighten the women from engaging with you? for they say, no man can love but one at a time.

L. Fop. That's just one more than ever I came up to; for, stop my breath, if ever I lov'd one in my life.

L. Mor. How do you get 'em then?

L. Fop. Why, sometimes as they get other people: I dress, and let them get me; or, if that won't do, as I got my title, I buy 'em.

L. Mor. But how can you, that profess indifference, think it worth your while to come so often up to the price of a woman of quality?

L. Fop. Because you must know, my Lord, that most of them begin now to come down to reason; I mean those that are to be had, for some die fools: but with the wiser sort, 'tis not of late so very expensive; now and then a *partie quarric*, a jaunt or two in a hack to an Indian house, a little China, an odd thing for a gown, or so, and in three days after you meet her at the conveniency of trying it *chez Mademoiselle d'Epingle*.

Sir Char. Ay, ay, my Lord, and when you are there, you know, what between a little chat, a dish of tea, Mademoiselle's good humour, and a *petit chanson* or two, the devil's in't if a man can't fool away the time, till he sees how it looks upon her by candle light,

L. Pop. Heh! heh! well said, Charles. I'gad I fancy thee and I have unlac'd many a reputation there.—Your great lady is as soon undress'd as her woman.

L. Mor. I could never find it so——the shame or scandal of a repulse always made me afraid of attempting a woman of condition.

Sir Char. Ha! ha! I'gad, my Lord, you deserve to be ill us'd, your modesty's enough to spoil any woman in the world: but my Lord and I understand the sex a little better; we see plainly that women are only cold, as some men are brave, from the modesty or fear of those that attack 'em.

L. Pop. Right, Charles——a man should no more give up his heart to a woman, than his sword to a bully; they are both as insolent as the devil after it.

Sir Char. How do you like that, my Lord?

[*Aside to L. Mor.*

L. Mor. Faith I envy him——But, my Lord, suppose your inclination should stumble upon a woman truly virtuous, would not a severe repulse from such an one put you strangely out of countenance?

L. Pop. Not at all, my Lord——for if a man don't mind a box o' the ear in a fair struggle with a fresh country girl, why the duce should he be concern'd at an impertinent frown for an attack upon a woman of quality?

L. Mor. Then you have no notion of a lady's cruelty?

L. Pop. Ha! ha! let me blood, if I think there's a greater jest in nature. I am ready to crack my guts with laughing to see a senseless flirt, because the creature happens to have a little pride that she calls virtue about her, give herself all the insolent airs of resentment and disdain to an honest fellow, that all the while does not care three pinches of snuff if she and her virtue were to run with their last favours through the first regiment of guards.——Ha! ha!——it puts me in mind of an affair of mine, so impertinent——

L. Mor. O! that's impossible, my Lord——pray let's hear it.

L. Fop. Why, I happen'd once to be very well in a certain man of quality's family, and his wife lik'd me.

L. Mor. How do you know she lik'd you?

L. Fop. Why, from the very moment I told her I lik'd her, she never durst trust herself at the end of a room with me.

L. Mor. That might be her not liking you.

L. Fop. My Lord——women of quality don't use to speak the thing plain:——but to satisfy you I did not want encouragement, I never came there in my life, but she did immediately smile, and borrow my snuff-box.

L. Mor. She lik'd your snuff at least——Well, but but how did she use you?

L. Fop. By all that's infamous, she jilted me.

L. Mor. How! jilted you?

L. Fop. Ay, death's curse, she jilted me.

L. Mor. Pray let's hear.

L. Fop. For when I was pretty well convinced she had a mind to me, I one day made her a hint of an appointment: upon which, with an insolent frown in her face (that made her look as ugly as the devil) she told me, that if ever I came thither again, her Lord should know that she had forbidden me the house before.——Did you ever hear of such a slut?

Sir Char. Intolerable!

L. Mor. But how did her answer agree with you?

L. Fop. O, passionately well! for I star'd full in her face, and burst out a laughing; at which she turn'd upon her heel, and gave a crack with her fan like a coach-whip, and bridled out of the room with the air and completion of an incens'd turkey-cock.

[*A servant whispers Sir Charles.*]

L. Mor. What did you then?

L. Fop. I——look'd after her, gap'd, threw up the sash, and fell a singing out of the window.——So that you see, My Lord, while a man is not in love, there's no great affliction in missing one's way to a woman.

Sir Char. Ay, ay, you talk this very well, my Lord; but now let's see how you dare behave yourself upon

Act III. The CARELESS HUSBAND. 31

action—dinner's serv'd, and the ladies stay for us.
—There's one within has been too hard for as brisk a man as yourself.

L. Mor. I guess who you mean—Have a care, my Lord, she'll prove your courage for you.

L. Fop. Will she? then she's an undone creature. For let me tell you, gentlemen, courage is the whole mystery of making love, and of more use than conduct is in war; for the bravest fellow in Europe may beat his brains out against the stubborn walls of a town—but
—“Women, born to be controll'd,

“Stoop to the forward and the bold.” [Exeunt.

ACT III. SCENE I.

The SCENE continues.

Enter Lord MORELOVE and Sir CHARLES.

Lord MORELOVE.

SO! did not I bear up bravely?

Sir Char. Admirably! with the best bred insolence in nature, you insulted like a woman of quality, when her country-bred husband's jealous of her in the wrong place.

L. Mor. Ha! ha! did you observe, when I first came into the room, how carelessly she brush'd her eyes over me, and when the company saluted me, stood all the while with her face to the window? ha! ha!

Sir Char. What astonish'd airs she gave herself, when you ask'd her, what made her so grave upon her old friends!

L. Mor. And whenever I offer'd any thing in talk, what affected care she took to direct her observations of it to a third person!

Sir Char. I observ'd she did not eat above the rump of a pigeon all dinner time.

L. Mor. And how she colour'd when I told her, her ladyship had lost her stomach.

Sir Char. If you keep your temper, she's undone.

L. Mor. Provided she sticks to her pride, I believe I may.

Sir Char. Ah! never fear her; I warrant, in the humour she is in, she would as soon part with her sense of feeling.

L. Mor. Well! what's to be done next?

Sir Char. Only observe her motions; for by her behaviour at dinner, I am sure she designs to gall you with my Lord Foppington; if so, you must even stand her fire, and then play my Lady Graveairs upon her, whom I'll immediately pique and prepare for your purpose.

L. Mor. I understand you—the properest woman in the world too, for she'll certainly encourage the least offer from me, in hopes of revenging her slights upon you.

Sir Char. Right, and the very encouragement she gives you, at the same time will give me a pretence to widen the breach of my quarrel to her.

L. Mor. Besides, Charles, I own I am fond of any attempt that will forward a misunderstanding there, for your lady's sake: a woman so truly good in her nature, ought to have something more from a man, than bare occasions to prove her goodness.

Sir Char. Why then, upon honour, my Lord, to give you proof that I am positively the best husband in the world, my wife——never yet found me out.

L. Mor. That may be her being the best wife in the world; she, may be, won't find you out.

Sir Char. Nay, if she won't tell a man of his faults, when she sees 'em, how the deuce should he mend 'em? But, however, you see I am going to leave 'em off as fast as I can.

L. Mor. Being tir'd of a woman, is indeed a pretty tolerable assurance of a man's not designing to fool on with her.—Here she comes, and, if I don't mistake, brimfull of reproaches.—You can't take her in a better time—I'll leave you.

Enter Lady GRAVEAIRS.

Your Ladyship's most humble servant. Is the company broke up, pray?

L. Grave. No, my Lord, they are just talking of basset; my Lord Foppington has a mind to tally, if your Lordship would encourage the table.

L. Mor. O Madam, with all my heart! But Sir Charles, I know, is hard to be got to it; I'll leave your Ladyship to prevail with him. *[Exit L. Morelove.]*

[Sir Charles and Lady Graveairs salute coldly, and trifle some time before they speak.]

L. Grave. Sir Charles, I sent you a note this morning—

Sir Char. Yes, Madam, but there were some passages I did not expect from your Ladyship; you seem to tax me with things that—

L. Grave. Look you, Sir, 'tis not at all material whether I tax'd you with any thing, or no: I don't in the least desire to hear you clear yourself; upon my word, you may be very easy as to that matter; for my part, I am mighty well satisfy'd things are as they are; all I have to say to you is, that you need not give yourself the trouble to call at my lodgings this afternoon, if you should have time; as you were pleas'd to send me word—and so your servant, Sir, that's all— *[Going.]*

Sir Char. Hold, Madam.

L. Grave. Look you, Sir Charles, 'tis not your calling me back that will signify any thing, I can assure you.

Sir Char. Why this extraordinary haste, Madam?

L. Grave. In short, Sir Charles, I have taken a great many things from you of late; that you know I have often told you I would positively bear no longer:— But I see things are in vain, and the more people strive to oblige people, the less they are thank'd for; and since there must be an end of one's ridiculousness one time or other, I don't see any time so proper as the present; and therefore, Sir, I desire you'd think of things accordingly.—Your servant—

[Going, he holds her.]

Sir Char. Nay, Madam, let's start fair however; you—

ought at least to stay 'till I'm as ready as your Ladyship, and then—if we must part——

Adieu, ye silent grots, and shady groves;
Ye soft amusements of our growing loves;
Adieu, ye whisper'd sighs that fann'd the fire,
And all the thrilling joys of young desire. *Affectedly.*

L. Grave. O mighty well, Sir: I am very glad we are at last come to a right understanding, the only way I have long wish'd for; not but I'd have you to know, I see your design thro' all your painted ease of resignation: I know you'd give your soul to make me uneasy too.

Sir Char. O fy, Madam, upon my word I would not make you uneasy, if it were in my power.

L. Grave. O dear Sir, you need not take such care, upon my word; you'll find I can part with you without the least disorder—I'll try, at least, and so once more, and for ever, Sir, your servant: not but you must give me leave to tell you as my last thought of you too, that I do think—you are a villain—*[Exit hastily.]*

Sir Char. O your very humble servant, Madam—*[Bowing low.]* What a charming quality is a woman's pride; that's strong enough to refuse a man her favours, when he's weary of 'em.—Ah! *[Lady Graveairs returns.]*

L. Grave. Look you, Sir Charles—don't presume upon the easiness of my temper; for to convince you that I am positively in earnest in this matter, I desire you would let me have what letters you have had of mine since you came to Windsor, and I expect you'll return the rest, as I will yours, as soon as we come to London.

Sir Char. Upon my faith, Madam, I never kept any; I always put snuff in 'em, and so they wear out.

L. Grave. Sir Charles, I must have 'em, for positively I won't stir without 'em.

Sir Char. Ha! then I must be civil, I see. *[Aside.]* Perhaps, Madam, I have no mind to part with them—or you.

L. Grave. Look you, Sir, all those sort of things are

in vain, now there's an end of every thing between us — If you say you won't give 'em, I must e'en get 'em as well as I can.

Sir Char. Hah! that won't do then, I find. [*Aside.*

L. Grave. Who's there? Mrs Edging. — Your keeping a letter, Sir, won't keep me, I'll assure you.

Enter EDGING.

Edg. Did your Ladyship call me, Madam?

L. Grave. Ay, child, pray do me the favour to fetch my scarf out of the dining-room.

Edg. Yes, Madam —

Sir Char. O! then there's hope again. [*Aside.*

Edg. Ha! she looks as if my master had quarrell'd with her; I hope she's going away in a huff — she shan't stay for her scarf, I warrant her. — This is pure!

[*Aside. Exit smiling.*

L. Grave. Pray, Sir Charles, before I go, give me leave now, after all, to ask you — why you have us'd me thus?

Sir Char. What is it you call usage, Madam?

L. Grave. Why then, since you will have it, how comes it you have been so grossly careless and neglectful of me of late? Only tell me seriously wherein I have deserv'd this.

Sir Char. Why then, seriously, Madam —

Re-enter EDGING with a scarf.

We are interrupted —

Edg. Here's your Ladyship's scarf, Madam.

L. Grave. Thank you, Mrs Edging — O la! pray will you let some body get me a chair to the door.

Edg. Humph! she might have told me that before, if she had been in such haste to go — [*Exit.*

L. Grave. Now, Sir.

Sir Char. Then seriously, I say, I am of late grown so very lazy in my pleasures, that I had rather lose a woman, than go through the plague and trouble of having or keeping her; and, to be free, I have found so much even in my acquaintance with you, whom I con-

self to be a mistress in the art of pleasing, that I am from henceforth resolved to follow no pleasure that arises above the degree of amusement:—and that woman that expects I should make her my business, why, —like my business, is then in a fair way of being forgot:—when once she comes to reproach me with vows, and usage, and stuff.——I had as lief hear her talk of bills, bonds, and ejectments; her passion becomes as troublesome as a law suit, and I would as soon converse with my solicitor.——In short, I shall never care pence for any woman that won't be obedient——

L. Grave. I'll swear, Sir, you have a very free way of treating people; I am glad I am so well acquainted with your principles. However.——And you'd have me obedient?

Sir Char. Why not? my wife's so, and I think she has as much pretence to be proud as your Ladyship.

L. Grave. Lord! is there no chair to be had, I wonder?

Enter EDGING.

Edg. Here's a chair, Madam.

L. Grave. 'Tis very well, Mrs Edging: pray will you let some body get me a glass of fair-water.

Edg. Hump! her huff's almost over, I suppose——I see he's a villain still! *[Exit.]*

L. Grave. Well, that was the prettiest fancy about obedience sure that ever was! certainly a woman of condition must be infinitely happy under the dominion of so generous a lover! But how came you to forget kicking and whipping all this while? methinks you should not have left so fashionable an article out of your scheme of government.

Sir Char. Um! No, there is too much trouble in that, though I have known 'em of admirable use in the reformation of some humourish gentlewomen:

L. Grave. But one thing more, and I have done——pray what degree of spirit must the lady have, that is to make herself happy under so much freedom, order and tranquillity?

Sir Char. O! she must at least have as much spirit as your Ladyship; for she'd give me no pleasure in breaking it.

L. Grace. No, that would be troublesome—you had better take one that's broken to your hand,—there are such fools to be hir'd, I believe; things that will rub your temples in an itching; kill you, fall fast asleep in their laps! Creatures, too, that think their wages their reward. I fancy, at last, that will be the best method for the lazy passion of a marry'd man, that has outliv'd his any other sense of gratification.

Sir Char. Look you, Madam,—I have lov'd you very well a great while; now you wou'd have me love you better and longer, which is not in my power to do; and I don't think there's any plague upon earth like a dun that comes for more money than one's ever likely to be able to pay.

L. Grace. A dun! do you take me for a dun, Sir? do I come a dunning to you? *[Walks in a hear.*

Sir Char. H!st! don't expose yourself—here's company.

L. Grace. I care not—A dun! you shall see, Sir, I can revenge an affront, tho' I despise the wretch that offers it—A dun! O! I could die with laughing at the fancy.

Sir Char. So! she's in admirable order!—Here comes my Lord, and I'm afraid in the very nick of his occasion for her.

Enter Lord MORELOVE.

L. Mor. O Charles! undone again! all's lost and ruin'd!

Sir Char. What's the matter now?

L. Mor. I have been playing the fool yonder even to contempt: my senseless jealousy has confess'd a weakness I never shall forgive myself—She has insulted on it to that degree too—I can't bear thought—O! Charles! this devil still is mistress of my heart, and I could dash my brains to think how grossly too I have let her know it.

Sir Char. Ah! how it would tickle her if she saw you in this condition: ha! ha! ha!

L. Mor. Pr'ythee don't torture me: think of some present ease, or I shall burst—

Sir Char. Well, well, let's hear, pray—what has she done to you? ha! ha!

L. Mor. Why, ever since I left you she treated me with so much coolness and ill nature, and that thing of a Lord with so much laughing ease, such an acquainted, such a spiteful familiarity, that at the last she saw and triumph'd in my uneasiness.

Sir Char. Well! and so you left the room in a pet? ha!

L. Mor. O worse, worse still! for at last, with half shame and anger in my looks, I thrust myself between my Lord and her, press'd her by the hand, and in a whisper trembling begg'd her in pity of herself and me to shew her good humour only where she knew it was truly valu'd; at which she broke from me with a cold smile, sat her down by the Peer, whisper'd him, and burst into a loud laughter in my face.

Sir Char. Ha! ha! then would I have given fifty pound to have seen your face: why, what, in the name of Common Sense, had you to do with humility? will you never have enough on't? Death! 'twas setting a lighted match to gun-powder to blow yourself up.

L. Mor. I see my folly now, Charles—but what shall I do with the remains of life that she has left me?

Sir Char. O throw it at her feet by all means, put on your tragedy face, catch fast hold of her petticoat, whip out your handkerchief, and in point blank verse, desire her one way or other to make an end of the business. *[In a whining tone.]*

L. Mor. What a fool do'st thou make me!

Sir Char. I only shew you, as you come out of her hands, my Lord.

L. Mor. How contemptibly have I behav'd myself!

Sir Char. That's according as you bear her behaviour.

L. Mor. Bear it! no: I thank thee, Charles—thou hast wak'd me now; and if I bear it—What have you done with my Lady Graveairs?

Sir Char. Your business, I believe—she's ready for you, she's just gone down stairs, and if you don't make haste after her, I expect her back again with a knife or a pistol, presently.

L. Mor. I'll go this minute.

Sir Char. No, stay a little, here comes my Lord: we'll see what we can get out of him first.

L. Mor. Methinks I now could laugh at her.

Enter Lord FOPPINGTON.

L. Fop. Nay, pr'ythee, Sir Charles, let's have a little of thee—We have been so *chagrin*, without thee, that, stop my breath, the Ladies are gone half asleep to church for want of thy company.

Sir Char. That's hard indeed, while your Lordship was among 'em: is Lady Betty gone too?

L. Fop. She was just upon the wing—but I caught her by the snuff-box, and she pretends to stay to see if I'll give it her again, or no.

L. Mor. Death! 'tis that I gave her, and the only present she ever would receive from me.—Ask him how he came by it? [*Aside to Sir Char.*

Sir Char. Pr'ythee don't be uneasy—Did she give it you, my Lord?

L. Fop. Faith, Charles, I can't say she did, or she did not; but we were playing the fool, and I took it—*a la*—Pshaw! I can't tell thee in French neither, but Horace touches it to a nicety—'twas *Pignus direptum male pertinaci*.

L. Mor. So! but I must bear it.—If your Lordship has a mind to the box, I'll stand by you in the keeping of it.

L. Fop. My Lord, I am passionately obliged to you, but I am afraid I cannot answer your hazarding so much of the Lady's favour.

L. Mor. Not at all, my Lord; 'tis possible I may not have the same regard to her frown that your Lordship has.

L. Fop. That's a bite, I am sure—he'd give a joint of his little finger to be as well with her as I am. [*Aside.*

But here she comes! Charles; stand by me—must not a man be a vain cockcomb now, to think this creature follow'd him?

Sir Char. Nothing so plain, my Lord.

L. Fop. Flattering devil!

Enter Lady BETTY.

L. Bet. Pshaw! my Lord Foppington! prythee don't play the fool now, but give me my snuff-box—Sir Charles, help me to take it from him.

Sir Char. You know I hate trouble, Madam.

L. Bet. Pooh! you'll make me stay till prayers are half over now.

L. Fop. If you'll promise me not to go to church, I'll give it you.

L. Bet. I'll promise nothing at all, for positively I will have it.—[*Struggling with him.*]

L. Fop. Then comparatively I won't part with it, ha! ha!

L. Bet. O you devil! you have kill'd my arm! Oh! Well—if you'll let me have it, I'll give you a better.

L. Mor. O Charles! that has a view of distant kindness in it.—[*Aside to Sir Charles.*]

L. Fop. Nay, now I keep it superlatively—I find there's a secret value in it.

L. Bet. O dismal! upon my word, I am only ashamed to give it you. Do you think I would offer such an odious fancy'd thing to any body I had the least value for?

Sir Char. Now it comes a little nearer, methinks it does not seem to be any kindness at all.

[*Aside to Lord Morelove.*]

L. Fop. Why, really, Madam, upon second view, it has not extremely the mode of a lady's utensil: are you sure it never held any thing but snuff?

L. Bet. O! you monster!

L. Fop. Nay, I only ask, because it seems to me to have very much the air and fancy of Monsieur Smoak-and-ot's tobacco-box.

L. Mor. I can bear no more.

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Sir Char. Why, don't then; I'll step into the company, and return to your relief immediately. *[Exit.]*

L. Mor. *[To L. Bet.]* Come, Madam, will your Ladyship give me leave to end the difference?—since the slightness of the thing may let you bestow it without any mark of favour, shall I beg it of your Ladyship?

L. Bet. O my Lord, no body sooner—I beg you give it my Lord.

[Looking earnestly on L. Fop. who smiling gives it to

L. Mor. and then bows gravely to her.

L. Mor. Only to have the honour of restoring it to your Lordship: and if there be any other trifle of mine, your Lordship has a fancy to, tho' it were a mistress, I don't know any person in the world that has so good a claim to my resignation.

L. Fop. O my Lord, this generosity will distract me.

L. Mor. My Lord, I do you but common justice: but from your conversation, I had never known the true value of the sex: you positively understand 'em the best of any man breathing, therefore I think every one of common prudence ought to resign to you.

L. Fop. Then positively your Lordship's the most obliging person in the world, for I'm sure your judgment can never like any woman that is not the finest creature in the universe. *[Bowing to L. Betty.]*

L. Mor. O! your Lordship does me too much honour; I have the worst judgment in the world, no man has been more deceiv'd in it.

L. Fop. Then your Lordship, I presume, has been apt to chuse in a mask, or by candle-light.

L. Mor. In a mask indeed, my Lord, and of all masks the most dangerous.

L. Fop. Pray what's that, my Lord?

L. Mor. A bare face.

L. Fop. Your Lordship will pardon me, if I don't so readily comprehend how a woman's bare face can hide her face.

L. Mor. It often hides her heart, my Lord, and therefore I think it sometimes a more dangerous mask than

a piece of velvet : that's rather a mark than a disguise of an ill woman : but the mischiefs skulking behind a beauteous form give no warning ; they are always sure, fatal, and innumerable.

L. Bet. O barbarous aspersions ! my Lord Foppington, have you nothing to say for the poor women ?

L. Fop. I must confess, Madam, nothing of this nature ever happen'd in my course of amours : I always judge the beauteous form of a woman to be the most agreeable part of her composition ; and when once a lady does me the honour to toss that into my arms, I think myself obliged in good-nature, not to quarrel about the rest of her equipage.

L. Bet. Why, ay, my Lord, there's some good humour in that now.

L. Mor. He's happy in a plain English stomach, Madam. I could recommend a dish that's perfectly to your Lordship's gust, where beauty is the only sauce to it.

L. Bet. So !

L. Fop. My Lord, when my wine's right, I never care it should be zested.

L. Mor. I know some ladies would thank you for that opinion.

L. Bet. My Lord Morelove's really grown such a churl to the women, I don't only think he is not, but can't conceive how he ever could be in love.

L. Mor. Upon my word, Madam, I once thought I was.

[Smiling.]

L. Bet. Fy ! fy ! how could you think so ? I fancy now you had only a mind to domineer over some poor creature, and so you thought you were in love ; ha ! ha !

L. Mor. The lady I lov'd, Madam, grew so unfortunate in her conduct, that she at last brought me to treat her with the same indifference and civility as I now pay your Ladyship.

L. Bet. And ten to one, just at that time she never thought you such tolerable company.

L. Mor. That I can't say, Madam ; for at that time she grew so affected, there was no judging of her thoughts at all.

[Mimicking her.]

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L. Bet. What, and so you left the poor lady? O you inconsistent creature!

L. Mor. No, Madam, to have lov'd her on had been inconstancy; for she was never two hours together the same woman. [*L. Bet. and L. Mor. seem to talk.*]

L. Fop. aside.] Ha! ha! ha! I see he has a mind to abuse her; so I'll ev'n give him an opportunity of doing his business with her at once for ever.—My Lord, I perceive your Lordship's going to be good company to the lady, and for her sake I don't think it good manners in me to disturb you—

Enter Sir CHARLES.

Sir Char. My Lord Foppington!

L. Fop. O Charles! I was just wanting thee.—Hark thee—I have three thousand secrets for thee—I have made such discoveries! To tell thee all in one word—Morelove's as jealous of me as the devil; heh! heh! heh!

Sir Char. Is't possible? has she given him any occasion?

L. Fop. Only rally'd him to death upon my account: she told me within, just now, she'd use him like a dog; and begg'd me to draw off for an opportunity.

Sir Char. O! keep in while the scent lyes, and she's your own, my Lord.

L. Fop. I can't tell that, Charles, but I'm sure she's fairly unharbour'd, and when once I throw off my inclinations, I usually follow 'em 'till the game has enough on't; and between thee and I she's pretty well blown too, she can't stand long, I believe, for, curse catch me, if I have not rid down half a thousand pound after her already.

Sir Char. What do you mean?

L. Fop. I have lost five hundred to her at piquet since dinner.

Sir Char. You are a fortunate man, faith; you are resolv'd not to be thrown out I see.

L. Fop. Hang it! what should a man come out for, if he does not keep up to the sport?

Sir Char. Well push'd, my Lord.

L. Fop. Tayo! have at her——

Sir Char. Down! down, my Lord——ah——'ware hanches.

L. Fop. Ah! Charles! [*Embracing him.*] Pr'ythee let's observe a little, there's a foolish cur, now I have run her to a stand, has a mind to be at her himself, and thou shalt see she won't stir out of her way for him.

[*They stand aside.*]

L. Mor. Ha! ha! Your Ladyship's very grave of a sudden, you look as if your lover had insolently recovered his common senses.

L. Bet. And your Lordship is so very gay, and unlike yourself, one wou'd swear you were just come from the pleasure of making your mistress afraid of you.

L. Mor. No, faith, quite contrary—for do you know, Madam, I have just found out, that upon your account I have made myself one of the most ridiculous puppies upon the face of the earth——I have, upon my faith!——nay, and so extravagantly such——ha! ha! ha! that it's at last become a jest even to myself; and I can't help laughing at it for the foul of me; ha! ha! ha!

L. Bet. I want to cure him of that laugh now. [*Aside.* My Lord, since you are so generous I'll tell you another secret: do you know too, that I still find (spite of all your great wisdom, and my contemptible qualities, as you are pleas'd now and then to call them:) do you know, I say, that I see under all this, you still love me with the same helpless passion; and can your vast foresight imagine I won't use you accordingly, for these extraordinary airs you are pleas'd to give yourself?

L. Mor. O by all means, Madam, 'tis fit you should, and I expect it, whenever it is in your power.——Confusion! [*Aside.*]

L. Bet. My Lord, you have talk'd to me this half hour, without confessing pain. [*Pauses and affects to gape.*] Only remember it.

L. Mor. Hell and tortures!

L. Bet. What did you say, my Lord?

L. Mor. Fire and furies!

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L. Bet. Ha! ha! he's disorder'd—Now I am easy—My Lord Foppington, have you a mind to your revenge at piquet?

L. Fop. I have always a mind to an opportunity of entertaining your Ladyship, Madam.

[*L. Bet. coquets with L. Fop.*

L. Mor. O Charles!—the insolence of this woman might furnish out a thousand devils.

Sir Char. And your temper is enough to furnish out a thousand such women.—Come away—I have business for you upon the terrafs.

L. Mor. Let me but speak one word to her—

Sir Char. Not a syllable—the tongue's a weapon you'll always have the worst at: for I see you have no guard, and she carries a devilish edge.

L. Bet. My Lord, don't let any thing I've said frighten you away; for if you have the least inclination to stay and rail, you know the old conditions, 'tis but your asking me pardon next day, and you may give your passion any liberty you think fit.

L. Mor. Daggers and death!

Sir Char. Are you mad?

L. Mor. Let me speak to her now, or I shall burst—

Sir Char. Upon condition you'll speak no more of her to me, my Lord, do as you please.

L. Mor. Pr'ythee pardon me—I know not what to do.

Sir Char. Come along—I'll set you to work I warrant you—Nay, nay, none of your parting ogles—Will you go?

L. Mor. Yes—and I hope for ever—

[*Ex. Sir Charles pulling away L. Mor.*

L. Fop. Ha! ha! ha! Did ever mortal monster set up for a lover with such unfortunate qualifications?

L. Bet. Indeed, my Lord Morelove has something strangely singular in his manner.

L. Fop. I thought I should have burst to see the creature pretend to rally, and give himself the airs of one of us.—But, run me through, Madam, your Ladyship push'd like a fencing master, that last thrust was a *coup de grace*, I believe—I'm afraid his Honour will hardly meet your Ladyship in haste again.

L. Bet. Not unless his second, Sir Charles, keeps him better in practice, perhaps.—Well, the humour of this creature has done me signal service to-day; I must keep it up for fear of a second engagement. [*Aside.*]

L. Fop. Never was poor wit so foil'd at his own weapon sure.

L. Bet. Wit? had he ever any pretence to it?

L. Fop. Ha! ha! he has not much in love, I think, though he wears the reputation of a very pretty young fellow, among some sort of people; but, strike me stupid, if ever I could discover common sense in all the progress of his amours: he expects a woman should like him for endeavouring to convince her, that she has not one good quality belonging to the whole composition of her soul and body.

L. Bet. That, I suppose, is only in a modest hope, that she'll mend her faults, to qualify herself for his vast merit, ha! ha!

L. Fop. Poor Morelove! I see she can't endure him.

[*Aside.*]

L. Bet. Or if one really had all those faults, he does not consider, that sincerity in love is as much out of fashion as sweet snuff; no body takes it now.

L. Fop. O! no mortal, Madam, unless it be here and there a Squire that's making his lawful court to the cherry cheek charms of my Lord Bishop's great fat daughter in the country.

L. Bet. O what a surfeiting couple has he put together!— [*Throwing her hand carelessly upon his.*]

L. Fop. Fond of me, by all that's tender!—Poor fool, I'll give thee ease immediately. [*Aside.*—] But, Madam, you were pleas'd just now to offer me my revenge at piquet.—Now here's no body within, and I think we can't make use of a better opportunity.

L. Bet. O! no: not now, my Lord!—I have a favour I would fain beg of you first.

L. Fop. But time, Madam, is very precious in this place, and I shall not easily forgive myself if I don't take him by the forelock.

L. Bet. But I have a great mind to have a little more

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sport with my Lord Morelove first, and would fain beg your assistance.

L. Fop. O! with all my heart; and, upon second thoughts, I don't know but piquing a rival in public may be as good sport, as being well with a mistress in private: for, after all, the pleasure of a fine woman is like that of her own virtue, not so much in the thing as the reputation of having it. [*Aside.*—Well, Madam, but how can I serve you in this affair?

L. Bet. Why, methought, as my Lord Morelove went out, he shew'd a stern resentment in his look, that seem'd to threaten me with rebellion and downright defiance: now I have a great fancy that you and I should follow him to the terrass, and laugh at his resolution before he has time to put it in practice.

L. Fop. And so punish his fault before he commits it! ha! ha! ha!

L. Bet. Nay, we won't give him time, if his courage should fail, to repent it.

L. Fop. Ha! ha! ha! let me blood if I don't long to be at it, ha! ha!

L. Bet. O! 'twill be such diversion to see him bite his lips, and broil within, only with seeing us ready to split our sides in laughing at nothing, ha! ha!

L. Fop. Ha! ha! I see, the creature does really like me. [*Aside.*] And then, Madam, to hear him hum a broken piece of a tune, in affectation of his not minding us—'twill be so foolish, when we know he loves us to death all the while, ha! ha!

L. Bet. And if at last his sage mouth shou'd open in surly contradiction of our humour, then will we, in pure opposition to his, immediately fall foul upon every thing that is not gallant and fashionable; constancy shall be the mark of age and ugliness, virtue a jest, we'll rally discretion out of doors, lay gravity at our feet, and only love, free love, disorder, liberty and pleasure, be our standing principles.

L. Fop. Madam, you transport me: for if ever I was obliged to nature for any one tolerable qualification, 'twas positively the talent of being exuberantly pleasant.

upon this subject.—I am impatient—my fancy's up—on the wing already—let's fly to him.

L. Bet. No, no; stay 'till I am just got out, our going together won't be so proper.

L. Fop. As your Ladyship pleases, Madam—But when this affair is over, you won't forget that I have a certain revenge due.

L. Bet. Ay, ay, after supper I am for you—Nay, you shan't stir a step, my Lord—

[*Seeing her to the door.*]

L. Fop. Only to tell you, you have fix'd me yours to the last existence of my soul's eternal entity—

L. Bet. O, your servant. [Exit.]

L. Fop. Ha! ha! stark mad for me, by all that's handsome! poor Morelove! that a fellow who has ever been abroad, should think a woman of her spirit is to be taken, as the Confederates do towns, by a regular siege, when so many of the French successes might have shewn him the surest way is to whisper the governor!—How can a coxcomb give himself the fatigue of bombarding a woman's understanding, when he may with so much ease make a friend of her constitution?—I'll see if I can shew him a little French play with Lady Betty—let me see—Ay, I'll make an end of it the old way; get her into piquet at her own lodgings—not mind one tittle of my play, give her every game before she's half up, that she may judge the strength of my inclination by my haste of losing up to her price; then of a sudden, with a familiar leer, cry—Rat piquet—sweep counters, cards and money all upon the floor, *et donc*—*l'affaire est faite.* [Exit.]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Castle Terrass.

Enter Lady BETTY, and Lady EASY.

Lady EASY.

MY dear, you really talk to me as if I were your lover, and not your friend; or else I am so dull, that by all you've said I can't make the least guess at your real thoughts——Can you be serious for a moment?

L. Bet. Not easily: but I would do more to oblige you.

L. Easy. Then pray deal ingenuously, and tell me without reserve, are you sure you don't love my Lord Morelove?

L. Bet. Then seriously——I think not——But because I won't be positive, you shall judge by the worst of my symptoms——First, I own I like his conversation, his person has neither fault nor beauty——well enough——I don't remember I ever secretly wish'd myself married to him, or——that I ever seriously resolv'd against it.

L. Easy. Well, so far you are tolerably safe:—but come—as to his manner of addressing to you, what effect has that had?

L. Bet. I am not a little pleas'd to observe few men follow a woman with the same fatigue and spirit, that he does me——am more pleas'd when he lets me use him ill; and if ever I have a favourable thought of him, 'tis when I see he can't bear that usage.

L. Easy. Have a care, that last is a dangerous symptom—he pleases your pride, I find.

L. Bet. Oh! perfectly: in that——I own no mortal ever can come up to him.

L. Easy. But now, my dear! now comes the main point——jealousy! are you sure you have never been

touch'd with it! Tell me that with a safe conscience, and then I pronounce you clear.

L. Bet. Nay, then I defy him; for positively I was never jealous in my life.

L. Easy. How, Madam! have you never been stir'd enough, to think a woman strangely forward for being a little familiar in talk with him? or are you sure his gallantry to another never gave you the least disorder? were you never, upon no accident, in an apprehension of losing him?

L. Bet. Hah! Why, Madam—Bless me!—wh—wh—why sure you don't call this jealousy, my dear?

L. Easy. Nay, nay, that is not the business—Have you ever felt any thing of this nature, Madam?

L. Bet. Lord! don't be so hasty, my dear—any thing of this nature——O lud! I swear I don't like it: dear creature, bring me off here: for I am half frightened out of my wits.

L. Easy. Nay, if you can't rally upon't, your wound is got over deep, I'm afraid.

L. Bet. Well, that's comfortably said, however.

L. Easy. But come to the point—how far have you been jealous?

L. Bet. Why—O bless me! He gave the music one night to my Lady Languish here upon the terrass; and (tho' she and I were very good friends) I remember I cou'd not speak to her in a week for't—Oh!

L. Easy. Nay, now you may laugh if you can; for, take my word, the marks are upon you.—But come—what else?

L. Bet. O nothing else, upon my word, my dear!

L. Easy. Well, one word more, and then I give sentence: suppose you were heartily convinc'd that he actually follow'd another woman?

L. Bet. But, pray, my dear, what occasion is there to suppose any such thing at all?

L. Easy. Guilty, upon my honour.

L. Bet. Pshaw! I defy him to say, that ever I own'd any inclination for him.

L. Easy. No, but you have given him terrible leave to guess it.

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L. Bet. If ever you see us meet again, you'll have but little reason to think so, I can assure you.

L. Easy. That I shall see presently; for here comes Sir Charles, and I'm sure my Lord can't be far off.

Enter Sir CHARLES.

Sir Char. Servant, Lady Betty—my dear, how do you do?

L. Easy. At your service, my dear—But pray what have you done with my Lord Morelove?

L. Bet. Ay, Sir Charles, pray how does your pupil do? have you any hopes of him? Is he docible?

Sir Char. Well, Madam, to confess your triumph over me, as well as him, I own my hopes of him are lost. I offer'd what I cou'd to his instruction, but he's incorrigibly yours, and undone:—and the news, I presume, does not displease your Ladyship.

L. Bet. Fy, fy, Sir Charles, you disparage your friend; I am afraid you don't take pains with him.

Sir Char. Ha! I fancy, Lady Betty, your good nature won't let you sleep a-nights: don't you love dearly to hurt people?

L. Bet. O! your servant; then without a jest, the man is so unfortunate in his want of patience, that let me die if I don't often pity him.

Sir Char. He! strange goodness!—O that I were your lover for a month or two!

L. Bet. What then?

Sir Char. I wou'd make that pretty heart's blood of yours ake in a fortnight.

L. Bet. Hugh—I should hate you, your assurance wou'd make your address intolerable.

Sir Char. I believe it wou'd, for I'd never address to you at all.

L. Bet. O! you clown you!

[Hitting him with her fan.]

Sir Char. Why, what to do? to feed a diseas'd pride, that's eternally breaking out in the affectation of an ill nature that—in my conscience I believe is but affectation.

L. Bet. You, nor your friend, have no great reason

to complain of my fondness, I believe. Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Char. [*Looking earnestly on her.*] Thou insolent creature! How can you make a jest of a man, whose whole life's but one continu'd torment from your want of common gratitude?

L. Bet. Torment! for my part, I really believe him as easy as you are.

Sir Char. Poor intolerable affectation! You know the contrary, you know him blindly yours: you know your power, and the whole pleasure of your life's the poor and low abuse of it.

L. Bet. Pray how do I abuse it——if I have any power?

Sir Char. You drive him to extremes that make him mad, then punish him for acting against his reason: you've almost turn'd his brain, his common judgment fails him; he's now, at this very moment, driven by his despair upon a project, in hopes to free him from your power, that I am sensible, and so must any one be that has his sense, of course must ruin him with you for ever; I almost blush to think of it, yet your unreasonable disdain has forc'd him to it; and should he now suspect I offer'd but a hint of it to you, and in contempt of his design, I know he'd call my life to answer it; but I have no regard to men in madness, I rather chuse for once to trust in your good-nature, in hopes the man, whom your unwary beauty hath made miserable, your generosity wou'd scorn to make ridiculous.

L. Bet. Sir Charles, you charge me very home: I never had it in my inclination to make any thing ridiculous that did not deserve it. Pray, what is this business you think so extravagant in him?

Sir Char. Something so absurdly rash and bold, you'll hardly forgive ev'n me that tell it you.

L. Bet. O fy! if it be a fault, Sir Charles, I shall consider it as his, not yours. Pray what is it?

L. Easy. I long to know, methinks.

Sir Char. You may be sure he did not want my dissuasions from it.

L. Bte. Let's hear it?

Sir Char. Why this man, whom I have known to love you with such excess of generous desire, whom I have heard in his ecstatic praises on your beauty talk till from the soft heat of his distilling thoughts the tears have fall'n——

L. Bet. O! Sir Charles—— [Blushing.

Sir Char. Nay, grudge not, since 'tis past, to hear what was (tho' you condemn'd it) once his merit: but now I own that merit ought to be forgotten.

L. Bet. Pray, Sir, be plain.

Sir Char. This man, I say, whose unhappy passion has so ill succeeded with you, at last has forfeited all his hopes (into which, pardon me, I confess my friendship had lately flatter'd him) his hopes of even deserving now your lowest pity or regard.

L. Bet. You amaze me—For I can't suppose his utmost malice dares assault my reputation—and what—

Sir Char. No, but he maliciously presumes the world will do it for him; and indeed he has taken no unlikely means to make 'em busy with their tongues: for he is this moment upon the open terrais, in the highest publick gallantry with my Lady Graveairs. And to convince the world and me, he said, he was not that tame lover we fancied him, he'd venture to give her the musick to-night: nay, I heard him, before my face, speak to one of the hautboys to engage the rest, and desired they would all take their directions only from my Lady Graveairs.

L. Bet. My Lady Graveairs! truly I think my Lord's very much in the right on't—for my part, Sir Charles, I don't see any thing in this that's so very ridiculous, nor indeed that ought to make me think either the better or worse of him for't.

Sir Char. Pshaw! pshaw! Madam, you and I know 'tis not in his power to renounce you; this is but the poor disguise of a resenting passion vainly ruffled to a storm, which the least gentle look from you can reconcile at will, and laugh into a calm again.

L. Bet. Indeed, Sir Charles, I shan't give myself that trouble, I believe.

Sir Char. So I told him, Madam: are not all your complaints, said I, already owing to her pride, and can you suppose this public defiance of it (which you know you can't make good too) won't incense her more against you?——That's what I'd have, said he, starting wildly, I care not what becomes of me, so I but live to see her piqued at it.

L. Bet. Upon my word, I fancy my Lord will find himself mistaken——I shan't be piqued I believe——I must first have a value for the thing I lose before it piques me: piqued! ha! ha! ha! [Disorder'd.

Sir Char. Madam, you've said the very thing I urg'd to him; I know her temper so well, said I, that, tho' she doated on you, if you once stood out against her, she'd sooner burst than shew the least motion of uneasiness.

L. Bet. I can assure you, Sir Charles, my Lord won't find himself deceiv'd in your opinion——Piqued!

Sir Char. She has it. [Aside.

L. Easy. Alas, poor woman! how little do our passions make us?

L. Bet. Not but I wou'd advise him to have a little regard to my reputation in this business: I wou'd have him take heed of publickly affronting me.

Sir Char. Right, Madam, that's what I strictly warn'd him of; for, among friends, whenever the world sees him follow another woman, the malicious tea-tables will be very apt to be free with your Ladyship.

L. Bet. I'd have him consider that, methinks.

Sir Char. But, alas! Madam, 'tis not in his power to think with reason; his mad resentment has destroy'd even his principles of common honesty: he considers nothing but a senseless proud revenge which in his fit of lunacy 'tis impossible that either threats or danger can dissuade him from.

L. Bet. What! does he defy me, threaten me! then he shall see that I have passions too, and know, as well as he, to stir my heart against any pride that dares insult me. Does he suppose I fear him? fear the little malice of a slighted passion, that my own scorn has

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stung into a despised resentment! Fear him! O! it provokes me to think he dare have such a thought!

L. Easy. Dear creature, don't disorder yourself so.

L. Bet. Let me but live to see him once more within my power, and I'll forgive the rest of fortune.

L. Easy. Well! certainly I am very ill-natured; for tho' I see this news has disturbed my friend, I can't help being pleased with any hopes of my Lady Graveairs being otherwise disposed of. [*Aside.*] My dear, I am afraid you have provoked her a little too far.

Sir Char. Oh! not at all—You shall see I'll sweeten her, and she'll cool like a dish of tea.

L. Bet. I may see him with his complaining face again—

Sir Char. I am sorry, Madam, you so wrongly judge of what I've told you; I was in hopes to have stirred your pity, not your anger; I little thought your generosity would punish him for faults which you yourself resolved he should commit.—Yonder he comes, and all the world with him: might I advise you, Madam, you should not resent the thing at all—I wou'd not so much as stay to see him in his fault; nay, I'd be the last that heard of it: nothing can sting him more, or so justly punish his folly, as your utter neglect of it.

L. Easy. Come, dear creature, be persuaded, and go home with me: indeed it will shew more indifference to avoid him.

L. Bet. No, Madam, I'll oblige his vanity for once, and stay to let him see how strangely he has piqued me.

Sir Char. [*Aside.*] O, not at all to speak of; you had as good part with a little of that pride of yours, or I shall yet make it a very troublesome companion to you.

[*Goes from them and whispers Lord Morelove.*]

Enter Lord Foppington; a little after Lord Morelove, Lady Graveairs, and other Ladies.

L. Fop. Ladies, your servant—O! we have wanted you beyond reparation——such diversion!

L. Bet. Well! my Lord! have you seen my Lord Morelove?

L. Fop. Seen him!—ha! ha! ha!—O, I have such things to tell you, Madam—you'll die—

L. Bet. O pray let's hear 'em; I was never in a better humour to receive them.

L. Fop. Hark you. [*They whisper.*]

L. Mor. So! she's engaged already. [*To Sir Charles.*]

Sir Char. So much the better: make but a just advantage of my success, and she's undone.

L. Fop. } Ha! ha! ha!

L. Bet. } Ha! ha! ha!

Sir Char. You see already what ridiculous pains she's taking to stir your jealousy, and cover her own.

L. Fop. } Ha! ha! ha!

L. Bet. } Ha! ha! ha!

L. Mor. O never fear me; for, upon my word, it now appears ridiculous even to me.

Sir Char. And hark you— [*Whispers L. Mor.*]

L. Bet. And so the widow was as full of airs as his Lordship?

Sir Char. Only observe that, and 'tis impossible you can fail. [*Aside.*]

L. Mor. Dear Charles, you have convinc'd me, and I thank you.

L. Grave. My Lord Morelove! what, do you leave us?

L. Mor. Ten thousand pardons, Madam, I was but just—

L. Grave. Nay, nay, no excuses, my Lord, so you will but let us have you again.

Sir Char. *aside to L. Grave.*] I see you have good humour, Madam, when you like your company.

L. Grave. And you, I see, for all your mighty thirst of dominion, cou'd stoop to be obedient, if one thought it worth one's while to make you so.

Sir Char. Ha! power would make her an admirable tyrant. [*Aside.*]

L. Easy, observing Sir Charles and L. Graveairs.] So! there's another couple have quarrell'd too I find—Those airs to my Lord Morelove, look as if design'd to recover Sir Charles into jealousy: I'll endeavour to join the company, and, it may be, that will let me into the

secret. [*Aside.*] My Lord Foppington, I vow this is very uncomplaisant, to engross so agreeable a part of the company to yourself.

Sir Char. Nay, my Lord, this is not fair indeed to enter into secrets among friends!—Ladies, what say you? I think we ought to declare against it.

Ladies. O, no secrets, no secrets.

L. Bet. Well, Ladies, I ought only to ask your pardon: my Lord's excuseable, for I would haul him into a corner.

L. Fop. I swear 'tis very hard, ho! I observe two people of extreme condition can no sooner grow particular, but the multitude of both sexes are immediately up, and think their properties invaded—

L. Bet. Odious multitude!—

L. Fop. Perish the *canaille*!

L. Grave. O, my Lord, we women have all reason to be jealous of Lady Betty Modish's power.

L. Mor. to Lady Betty.] As the men, Madam, all have of my Lord Foppington. Beside, favourites of great merit discourage those of an inferior class for their prince's service: he has already lost you one of your retinue, Madam.

L. Bet. Not at all, my Lord, he has only made room for another: one must sometimes make vacancies, or there could be no preferments.

L. Easy. Ha! ha! Ladies favours, my Lord, like places at court, are not always held for life, you know.

L. Bet. No, indeed! if they were, the poor fine women would be always us'd like their wives, and no more minded than the business of the nation.

L. Easy. Have a care, Madam, an undeserving favourite has been the ruin of many a prince's empire.

L. Fop. Ha! ha! Upon my soul, Lady Betty, we must grow more discreet; for positively if we go on at this rate, we shall have the world throw you under the scandal of constancy; and I shall have all the swords of condition at my throat for a monopolist.

L. Mor. O, there's no great fear of that, my Lord, though the men of sense give it over, there will be al-

ways some idle fellows vain enough to believe their merit may succeed as well as your Lordship's.

L. Bet. Or if they shou'd not, my Lord, cast lovers, you know, need not fear being long out of employment, while there are so many well-disposed people in the world.—There are generally neglected wives, stale maids, or charitable widows, always ready to relieve the necessities of a disappointed passion—and, by the way, hark you, Sir Charles.

L. Mor. aside.] So! she's stirr'd, I see, for all her pains to hide it—she wou'd hardly have glanc'd an affront at a woman she was not piqued at.

L. Grave. aside.] That wit was thrown at me, I suppose; but I'll return it.

L. Betty, softly to Sir Charles.] Pray, how came you all this while to trust your mistress so easily?

Sir Char. One is not so apt, Madam, to be alarm'd at the liberties of an old acquaintance, as perhaps your Ladyship ought to be at the resentment of an hard us'd honourable lover.

L. Bet. Suppose I were alarm'd, how does that make you easy?

Sir Char. Come, come, be wise at last; my trusting them together, may easily convince you, that (as I told you before) I know his addresses to her are only outward; and 'twill be your fault now, if you let him go on till the world thinks him in earnest, and a thousand busy tongues are set upon malicious enquiries into your reputation.

L. Bet. Why, Sir Charles, do you suppose, while he behaves himself as he does, that I won't convince him of my indifference?

Sir Char. But hear me, Madam——

L. Grave. aside.] The air of that whisper looks as if the lady had a mind to be making her peace again; and 'tis possible, his worship's being so busy in the matter too, may proceed as much from his jealousy of my Lord with me, as friendship to her, at least I fancy so: therefore I'm resolv'd to keep her still piqued, and prevent it, tho' it be only to gall him.——Sir Charles,

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that is not fair to take a privilege you just now declar'd against in my Lord Foppington.

L. Mor. Well observ'd, Madam.

L. Grave. Beside, it looks so affected to whisper, when every body guesses the secret.

L. Mor. Ha! ha! ha!

L. Bet. O, Madam, your pardon in particular: but 'tis possible you may be mistaken: the secrets of people that have any regard to their actions, are not so soon guess'd, as theirs that have made a confident of the whole town.

L. Fop. Ha! ha! ha!

L. Grave. A coquette, in her affected airs of disdain to a revolted lover, I'm afraid, must exceed your ladyship in prudence, not to let the world see at the same time she'd give her eyes to make her peace with him: ha! ha!

L. Mor. Ha! ha! ha!

L. Bet. 'Twould be a mortification indeed, if it were in the power of a fading widow's charms to prevent it; and the man must be miserably reduc'd sure, that cou'd bear to live buried in woollen, or take up with the motherly comforts of a swan-skin petticoat. Ha! ha!

L. Fop. Ha! ha! ha!

L. Grave. Widows, it seems, are not so squeamish to their interest: they know their own minds, and take the man they like, tho' it happens to be one that a froward vain girl has disoblig'd, and is pining to be friends with.

L. Mor. Nay, tho' it happens to be one that confesses he once was fond of a piece of folly, and afterwards ashamed on't.

L. Bet. Nay, my Lord, there's no standing against two of you.

L. Fop. No, faith: that's odds at tennis, my Lord: not but, if your Ladyship pleases, I'll endeavour to keep your back hand a little: tho', upon my soul, you may safely set me up at the line; for, knock me down, if ever I saw a rest of wit better play'd, than that last, in my life.—What say you, Madam, shall we engage?

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L. Bet. As you please, my Lord.

L. Fop. Ha! ha! ha! *Allons tout de bon, Joues, m's Lord.*

L. Mor. O pardon me, Sir, I shall never think myself in any thing a match for the lady.

L. Fop. To you, Madam.

L. Bet. That's much, my Lord, when the world knows you have been so many years teasing me to play the fool with you.

L. Fop. Ah! *bien joué.* Ha! ha! ha!

L. Mor. At that game, I confess your Ladyship has chosen a much properer person to improve your hand with.

L. Fop. To me, Madam.—My Lord, I presume, whoever the lady thinks fit to play the fool with, will at least be able to give as much envy as the wise person that had not wit enough to keep well with her when he was so.

L. Grave. O, my Lord! both parties must needs be greatly happy; for, I dare swear, neither will have any rivals to disturb 'em.

L. Mor. Ha! ha!

L. Bet. None that will disturb 'em, I dare swear.

L. Fop. Ha! ha! ha!

L. Mor.

L. Grave. } Ha! ha! ha!

L. Bet.

Sir Char. I don't know, gentlefolks,—but you are all in extreme good humour, methinks: I hope there's none of it affected.

L. Easy. I should be loth to answer for any but my Lord Foppington. *[Aside.]*

L. Bet. Mine is not, I'll swear.

L. Mor. Nor mine, I'm sure.

L. Grave. Mine's sincere, depend upon't.

L. Fop. And may the eternal frowns of the whole sex doubly demme, if mine is not.

L. Easy. Well, good people, I am mighty glad to hear it. You have all perform'd extremely well; but if you please, you shall ev'n give over your wit now, while it is well.

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L. Bet. to herself.] Now I see his humour, I'll stand it out, if I were sure to die for't.

Sir Char. You shou'd not have proceeded so far with my Lord Foppington, after what I had told you.

[Aside to L. Bet.]
L. Bet. Pray, Sir Charles, give me leave to understand myself a little.

Sir Char. Your pardon, Madam, I thought a right understanding wou'd have been for both your interests, and reputation.

L. Fet. For his, perhaps.

Sir Char. Nay then, Madam, it's time for me to take care of my friend.

L. Bet. I never in the least doubted your friendship to him in any thing that was to shew yourself my enemy.

Sir Char. Since I see, Madam, you have so ungrateful a sense of my Lord Morelove's merit, and my service, I shall never be aham'd of using my power henceforth to keep him entirely out of your Ladyship's.

L. Bet. Was ever any thing so insolent! I could find in my heart to run the hazard of a downright compliance, if it were only to convince him, that my power, perhaps, is not inferior to his. *[To herself.]*

L. Easy. My Lord Foppington, I think you generally lead the company upon these occasions. Pray, will you think of some prettier sort of diversion for us, than parties and whippers?

L. Fop. What say you, Ladies, shall we step and see what's done at the basset-table?

L. Bet. With all my heart; Lady Easy —

L. Easy. I think 'tis the best thing we can do; and because we won't part to-night, you shall all sup where you din'd.—What say you, my Lord?

L. Mor. Your Ladyship may be sure of me, Madam.

L. Fop. Ay! ay! we'll all come.

L. Easy. Then, pray, let's change parties a little. My Lord Foppington, you shall squire me.

L. Fop. O! you do me honour, Madam.

L. Bet. My Lord Morelove, pray let me speak with you.

L. Mor. Me, Madam?

L. Bet. If you please, my Lord.

L. Mor. Ha! that look shot through me! what can this mean? [*Aside.*]

L. Bet. This is no proper place to tell you what it is, but there is one thing I'd fain be truly answer'd in: I suppose you'll be at my Lady Easy's by and by, and if you'll give me leave there——

L. Mor. If you please to do me that honour, Madam, I shall certainly be there.

L. Bet. That's all, my Lord.

L. Mor. Is not your Ladyship for walking?

L. Bet. If your Lordship dares venture with me.

L. Mor. O, Madam! [*taking her hand.*] How my heart dances! what heavenly music's in her voice, when softened into kindness! [*Aside.*]

L. Bet. Ha! his hand trembles—Sir Charles may be mistaken.

L. Fop. My Lady Graveairs, you won't let Sir Charles leave us?

L. Grave. No, my Lord, we'll follow you.—Stay a little. [*To Sir Charles.*]

Sir Char. I thought your Ladyship design'd to follow 'em.

L. Grave. Perhaps I'd speak with you.

Sir Char. But, Madam, consider, we shall certainly be observ'd.

L. Grave. Lord, Sir! if you think it such a favour.

[*Exit hastily.*]

Sir Char. Is she gone! let her go, &c. [*Ex. singing.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

The SCENE continues.

Enter Sir CHARLES and Lord MORELOVE.

Sir CHARLES.

COME a little this way—my Lady Graveairs had an eye upon me as I stole off, and I'm apprehensive will make use of any opportunity to talk with me.

L. Mor. O! we are pretty safe here.—Well: you were speaking of Lady Betty.

Sir Char. Ay, my Lord,—I say, notwithstanding all this sudden change of her behaviour, I wou'd not have you yet be too secure of her: for, between you and I, since I told you I have profess'd myself an open enemy to her power with you, 'tis not impossible but this new air of good humour may very much proceed from a little woman's pride, of convincing me you are not yet out of her power.

L. Mor. Not unlikely: but still can we make no advantage of it?

Sir Char. That's what I have been thinking of.—Look you.—Death! my Lady Graveairs!

L. Mor. Ha! she will have audience, I find.

Sir Char. There's no avoiding her—the truth is, I have ow'd her a little good nature a great while—I see there is but one way of getting rid of her—I must ev'n appoint her a day of payment at last. If you'll step into my lodgings, my Lord, I'll just give her an answer, and be with you in a moment.

L. Mor. Very well, I'll stay there for you.
[Exit *L. Morelove.*

Enter Lady GRAVEAIRS on the other side.

L. Grave. Sir Charles!

Sir Char. Come, come, no more of these reproachful looks; you'll find, Madam, I have deserv'd better of you than your jealousy imagines——Is it a fault to be tender of your reputation?——Fy, fy,——This may be a proper time to talk, and of my contriving too—You see I just now shook off my Lord Morelove on purpose.

L. Grave. May I believe you?

Sir Char. Still doubting my fidelity, and mistaking my discretion for want of good-nature?

L. Grave. Don't think me troublesome—for I confess 'tis death to think of parting with you. Since the world sees, for you I have neglected friends and reputation, have stood the little insults of disdainful prudes, that envy'd me perhaps your friendship; have borne the

freezing looks of near and general acquaintance—since this is so—don't let 'em ridicule me too, and say my foolish vanity undid me; don't let 'em point at me as a cast mistress.

Sir Char. You wrong me to suppose the thought; you'll have better of me when we meet: when shall you be at leisure?

L. Grave. I confess I would see you once again; if what I have more to say prove ineffectual, perhaps it may convince me then, 'tis my interest to part with you——Can you come to-night?

Sir Char. You know we have company, and I am afraid they'll stay too late—Can't it be before supper?—What's o' clock now?

L. Grave. It's almost six.

Sir Char. At seven then be sure of me, till when I'd have you go back to the ladies to avoid suspicion, and about that time have the vapours.

L. Grave. May I depend upon you? [Exit.

Sir Char. Depend on every thing.—A very troublesome business this—send me once fairly rid on't—if ever I'm caught in an *honourable* affair again!—A debt now that a little ready civility, and away, would satisfy, a man might bear with; but to have a rent-charge upon one's good-nature, with an unconscionable long scroll of arrears too, that would eat out the profits of the best estate in Christendom—ah—intolerable! Well! I'll ev'n to my Lord, and shake off the thoughts on't. [Exit.

Enter Lady BETTY and Lady EASY.

L. Bet. I observe, my dear, you have usually this great fortune at play, it were enough to make one suspect your good luck with an husband.

L. Easy. Truly I don't complain of my fortune either way.

L. Bet. Pr'ythee tell me, you are often advising me to it, are there those real comfortable advantages in marriage, that our old aunts and grandmothers would persuade us of?

L. Easy. Upon my word, if I had the worst husband in the world, I should still think so.

L. Bet. Ay, but then the hazard of not having a good one, my dear.

L. Easy. You may have a good one, I dare say, if you don't give him airs till you spoil him.

L. Bit. Can there be the same dear, full delight in giving ease, as pain? O! my dear, the thought of parting with one's power is insupportable!

L. Easy. And the keeping it, till it dwindles into no power at all, is most ruefully foolish.

L. Bot. But still to marry before one's heartily in love—

L. Easy. Is not half so formidable a calamity.—
But if I have any eyes, my dear, you'll run no great hazard of that, in venturing upon my Lord Morelove.—
You don't know, perhaps, that within this half hour the tone of your voice is strangely soften'd to him, ha! ha! ha!

L. Est. My dear, you are positively, one or other, the most censorious creature in the world—and so I see 'tis in vain to talk with you.—Pray, will you go back to the company?

L. Easy. Ah poor Lady Betty! [Exeunt.]

The SCENE *changes to Sir CHARLES's Lodgings.*

Enter Sir CHARLES and Lord MORELOVE.

L. Mor. Charles! you have transported me! you have made my part in the scene so very easy too, 'tis impossible I should fail in it.

Sir Char. That's what I considered; for now the more you throw yourself into her power, the more I shall be able to force her into yours.

L. Mor. After all (begging the ladies pardon) your fine women, like bullies, are only stout when they know their men : a man of an honest courage may fright 'em into any thing ! Well, I am fully instructed, and will about it instantly.—Won't you go along with me ?

Sir Char. That may not be so proper;—besides, I have a little business on my hands.

L. Mor. O! your servant, Sir—Good bye to you—you shan't stir.

Sir Char. My Lord, your servant—[*Exit L. Mor.* So! now to dispose of myself, till 'tis time to think of my Lady Graveairs—Umph! I have no great maw to that business, methinks—I don't find myself in humour enough to come up to the civil things that are usually expected in the making up of an old quarrel—[*Edging crosses the stage.*] There goes a warmer temptation by half.—Ha! into my wife's bed-chamber too—I question if the jade has any great business there;—I have a fancy she has only a mind to be taking the opportunity of no body's being at home, to make her peace with me.—Let me see—ay, I shall have time enough to go to her ladyship afterwards—Besides, I want a little sleep, I find—Your young fops may talk of their women of quality—but to me now, there's a strange agreeable convenience in a creature one is not obliged to say much to upon these occasions. [*Going.*]

Enter EDGING.

Edg. Did you call me, Sir?

Sir Char. Ha! all's right—[*Aside.*]—Yes, Madam, I did call you.

Edg. What wou'd you please to have, Sir?

Sir Char. Have! why, I wou'd have you grow a good girl, and know when you are well us'd, hussy.

Edg. Sir, I don't complain of any thing, not I.

Sir Char. Well, don't be uneasy—I am not angry with you now—Come and kiss me.

Edg. Lard, Sir!

Sir Char. Don't be a fool now—come hither.

Edg. Plhaw—

[*Goes to him.*]

Sir Char. No wry face—so—sit down. I won't have you look grave neither, let me see you smile, you jade you.

Edg. Ha! ha!

[*Laughs and blushes.*]

Sir Char. Ah, you melting rogue!

Edg. Come, don't you be at your tricks now.—Lard! can't you sit still and talk with one? I am sure there's

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ten times more love in that, and fifty times the satisfaction, people may say what they will.

Sir Char. Well! now you're good, you shall have your own way—I am going to ly down in the next room; and, since you love a little chat, come and throw my night-gown over me, and you shall talk me to sleep. [Exit Sir Charles.

Edg. Yes, Sir—For all his way, I see he likes me still. [Exit after him.

The SCENE changes to the Terras.

Enter Lady BETTY, Lady EASY, and Lord MORELOVE.

L. Mor. Nay, Madam, there you are too severe upon him; for bating now and then a little vanity, my Lord Foppington does not want wit sometimes to make him a very tolerable woman's man.

L. Bet. But such eternal vanity grows tiresome.

L. Easy. Come, if he were not so loose in his morals, vanity methinks might be easily excus'd, considering how much 'tis in fashion: for pray observe, what's half the conversation of most of the fine young people about town, but a perpetual affectation of appearing foremost in the knowledge of manners, new modes, and scandal? and in that I don't see any body comes up to him.

L. Mor. Nor I indeed—and here he comes—Pray, Madam, let's have a little more of him: no body shews him to more advantage than your Ladyship.

L. Bet. Nay, with all my heart; you'll second me, my Lord.

L. Mor. Upon occasion, Madam.

L. Easy. Engaging upon parties, my Lord.

[*Aside, and smiling to L. Mor.*

Enter Lord FOPPINGTON.

L. Fop. So, Ladies! what's the affair now?

L. Bet. Why you were, my Lord; I was allowing you a great many good qualities, but Lady Easy says you are a perfect hypocrite; and that whatever airs you give yourself to the women, she's confident you value no woman in the world equal to your own lady.

L. Fop. You see, Madam, how I am scandaliz'd upon your account. But it's so natural for a prude to be malicious, when a man endeavours to be well with any body but herself: did you never observe she was piqu'd at that before? Ha! ha!

L. Bet. I'll swear you are a provoking creature.

L. Fop. Let's be more familiar upon't, and give her disorder! ha! ha!

L. Bet. Ha! ha! ha!

L. Fop. Stap my breath, but Lady Easy is an admirable discoverer—Marriage is indeed a prodigious security of one's inclination: a man's likely to take a world of pains in an employment, where he can't be turn'd out for his idleness.

L. Bet. I vow, my Lord, that's vastly generous to all the fine women; you are for giving them a despotic power in love, I see, to reward and punish as they think fit.

L. Fop. Ha! ha! Right, Madam, what signifies beauty without power? and a fine woman when she's married makes as ridiculous a figure as a beaten general marching out of a garrison.

L. Easy. I'm afraid, Lady Betty, the greatest danger in your use of power, would be from a too heedless liberality: you would more mind the man than his merit.

L. Fop. Piqued again, by all that's fretful—Well, certainly to give envy is a pleasure inexpressible.

[To Lady Betty.

L. Bet. Ha! ha!

L. Easy. Does not she show him well, my Lord?

[Aside to *L. Mor.*

L. Mor. Perfectly, and me to myself—For now I almost blush to think I ever was uneasy at him.

[To Lady Easy.

L. Fop. Lady Easy, I ask ten thousand pardons, I'm afraid I am rude all this while.

L. Easy. O not at all, my Lord, you are always good company when you please: not but in some things, indeed, you are apt to be like other fine gentlemen, a little too loose in your principles.

L. Fop. O, Madam, never to the offence of the Ladies; I agree in any community with them; no body

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is a more constant churchman, when the fine women are there.

L. Easy. O fy, my Lord, you ought not to go for their fakes at all. And I wonder, you that are for being such a good husband of your virtues, are not afraid of bringing your prudence into a lampoon or a play.

L. Bet. Lampoons and plays, Madam, are only things to be laugh'd at.

L. Mor. Plays now indeed one need not be so much afraid of; for since the late short-sighted view of 'em, vice may go on and prosper, the stage dares hardly shew a vicious person speaking like himself, for fear of being call'd profane for exposing him.

L. Easy. 'Tis hard, indeed, when people won't distinguish between what's meant for contempt, and what for example.

L. Fop. Odso! Ladies, the court's coming home, I see, shall not we make our bows?

L. Bet. O! by all means.

L. Easy. Lady Betty, I must leave you; for I'm oblig'd to write letters, and I know you won't give me time after supper.

L. Bet. Well, my dear, I'll make a short visit and be with you.

[Exit Lady Easy. Pray what's become of my Lady Graveairs?

L. Mor. Oh, I believe she's gone home, Madam; she seem'd not to be very well.

L. Fop. And where's Sir Charles, my Lord?

L. Mor. I left him at his own lodgings.

L. Bet. He's upon some ramble, I'm afraid.

L. Fop. Nay, as for that matter, a man may ramble at home sometimes— But here come the chaises; we must make a little more haste, Madam. [Exeunt.

The SCENE changes to Sir Charles's Lodgings.

Enter Lady EASY and a SERVANT.

L. Easy. Is your master come home?

Serv. Yes, Madam.

L. Easy. Where is he?

Serv. I believe, Madam, he's laid down to sleep.

L. Easy. Where's Edging? bid her get me some wax, and paper—Stay. it's no matter, now I think on it—there's some above upon my toilet. [*Exeunt severally.*]

The SCENE opens, and discovers Sir Charles without his periwig, and Edging by him, both asleep in two easy chairs.

Then enter Lady EASY, who starts and trembles, some time unable to speak.

L. Easy. Ha!
 Protect me, virtue, patience, reason!
 Teach me to bear this killing fight, or let
 Me think my dreaming senses are deceiv'd!
 For sure a fight like this, might raise the arm
 Of duty, ev'n to the breast of love! At least
 I'll throw this vizer of my patience off:
 Now wake him in his guilt,
 And barefac'd front him with my wrongs.
 I'll talk to him till he blushes, nay till he—
 Frowns on me, perhaps—and then
 I'm lost again—The ease of a few tears
 Is all that's left to me—
 And duty, too, forbids me to insult,
 When I have vow'd obedience—Perhaps
 The fault's in me, and Nature has not form'd
 Me with the thousand little requisites
 That warm the heart to love—
 Somewhere there is a fault—
 But Heav'n best knows what both of us deserve.
 Ha! bare-headed, and in so sound a sleep!
 Who knows, while thus expos'd to th' unwholesome air,
 But Heav'n, offended, may o'ertake his crime,
 And in some languishing distemper leave him
 A severe example of its violated laws—
 Forbid it mercy, and forbid it love.
 This may prevent it. [*Takes a steinkirk off her neck, and lays it gently on his head.*]
 And if he shou'd wake offended at my too busy care,

let my heart-breaking patience, duty, and my fond affection plead my pardon. [Exit.

[After she has been out some time, a bell rings; Edging wakes, and stirs Sir Charles.

Edg. Oh!

Sir Char. How now! what's the matter?

Edg. O! Bless my soul, my Lady's come home.

Sir Char. Go, go then. [Bell rings.

Edg. O lud! my head's in such a condition too: [Runs to the glass.] I am coming, Madam—O lud! here's no powder neither—Here, Madam. [Exit.

Sir Char. How now? [Feeling the steinkirk upon his head.] What's this? How came it here? [Puts on his wig.] Did not I see my wife wear this to-day?—Death! she can't have been here, sure—It could not be jealousy that brought her home—for my coming was accidental—so too, I fear, might hers.—How careless have I been?—not to secure the door neither—'Twas foolish—It must be so! she certainly has seen me here sleeping with her woman:—if so, how low an hypocrite to her must that sight have prov'd me?—The thought has made me despicable even to myself—How mean a vice is lying! and how often have these empty pleasures lull'd my honour and my conscience to a lethargy,—while I grossly have abus'd her, poorly skulking behind a thousand falsehoods! Now I reflect, this has not been the first of her discoveries—How contemptible a figure must I have made to her!—A crowd of recollected circumstances confirms me now, she has been long acquainted with my follies, and yet with what amazing prudence has she borne the secret pangs of injur'd love, and wore an everlasting smile to me! This asks a little thinking—something should be done—I'll see her instantly, and be resolv'd from the behaviour. [Exit.

The SCENE changes to another Room.

Enter Lady EASY and EDGING.

L. Easy. Where have you been, Edging?

Edg. Been, Madam! I—I—I—I came as soon as I heard you ring, Madam,

L. Easy. How guilt confounds her! but she's below my thought—Fetch my last new scarf hither—I have a mind to alter it a little—make haste.

Edg. Yes, Madam.—I see she does not suspect any thing. [Exit.]

L. Easy. Heigh ho! [*Sitting down.*] I had forgot—but I'm unfit for writing now—'Twas an hard conflict—yet 'tis a joy to think it over: a secret pride, to tell my heart my conduct has been just.—How low are vicious minds, that offer injuries, how much superior innocence, that bears 'em!—Still there's a pleasure ev'n in the melancholy of a quiet conscience—Away my fears, it is not yet impossible—for while his human nature is not quite shook off, I ought not to despair.

Re-enter EDGING with a scarf.

Edg. Here's the scarf, Madam.

L. Easy. So, sit down there—and, let me see—Here—Rip off all that silver.

Edg. Indeed, I always thought it would become your Ladyship better without it—But now suppose, Madam, you carry'd another row of gold round the scollops, and then you take and lay this silver plain all along the gathers, and your Ladyship will perfectly see, it will give the thing ten thousand times another air.

L. Easy. Pr'ythee don't be impertinent, do as I bid you.

Edg. Nay, Madam, with all my heart, your Ladyship may do as you please.

L. Easy. This creature grows so confident, and I dare not part with her, lest he should think it jealousy. [*Aside.*]

Enter Sir CHARLES.

Sir Char. So, my dear! what, at work! how are you employ'd, pray?

L. Easy. I was thinking to alter this scarf here.

Sir Char. What's amiss? methinks it's very pretty.

Edg. Yes, Sir, it's pretty enough for that matter, but my Lady has a mind it should be proper too.

Sir Char. Indeed!

L. Easy. I fancy plain gold and black would become me better,

Sir Char. That's a grave thought, my dear.

Edg. O dear Sir, not at all, my Lady's much in the right; I am sure as it is, it's fit for nothing but a girl.

Sir Char. Leave the room.

Edg. Lard, Sir, I can't stir—I must stay to—

Sir Char. Go——— [*Angrily.*]

Edg. *throwing down the work hastily, and crying, aside.*]

If ever I speak to him again, I'll be burn'd. [*Ex. Edging.*]

Sir Char. Sit still, my dear,—I came to talk with you—and, which you well may wonder at, what I have to say is of importance too; but 'tis in order to my hereafter always talking kindly to you.

L. Easy. Your words were never disobliging, nor can I charge you with a look that ever had the appearance of unkind.

Sir Char. The perpetual spring of your good humour lets me draw no merit from what I have appear'd to be, which makes me curious now to know your thoughts of what I really am: and never having ask'd you this before, it puzzles me; nor can I (my strange negligence consider'd) reconcile to reason your first thoughts of venturing upon marriage with me.

L. Easy. I never thought it such a hazard.

Sir Char. How cou'd a woman of your restraint in principles, sedateness, sense, and tender disposition, propose to see an happy life with one (now I reflect) that hardly took an hour's pains ev'n before marriage, to appear but what I am: a loose unheeded wretch, absent in all I do, civil, and as often rude without design, unseasonably thoughtful, easy to a fault, and in my best of praise, but carelessly good-natur'd? How shall I reconcile your temper with having made so strange a choice?

L. Easy. Your own words may answer you.—Your having never seem'd to be, but what you really were; and thro' that carelessness of temper there still shone forth to me an undesigning honesty I always doubted of in smoother faces: thus, while I saw you took least pains to win me, you pleas'd and woo'd me most: nay, I have thought, that such a temper could never be deliberately unkind: or at the worst I knew, that errors from want of thinking might be born; at least, when probably one

moment's serious thought would end 'em. These were my worst of fears, and these, when weigh'd by growing love against my solid hopes, were nothing.

Sir Char. My dear, your understanding startles me, and justly calls my own in question: I blush to think I've worn so bright a jewel in my bosom, and till this hour have scarce been curious once to look upon its lustre.

L. Easy. You set too high a value on the common qualities of an easy wife.

Sir Char. Virtues, like benefits, are double, when conceal'd: and I confess I yet suspect you of a higher value far than I have spoke you.

L. Easy. I understand you not.

Sir Char. I'll speak more plainly to you—be free and tell me—Where did you leave this handkerchief?

L. Easy. Ha!

Sir Char. What is't you start at? you hear the question.

L. Easy. What shall I say? my fears confound me.

Sir Char. Be not concern'd, my dear, be easy in the truth, and tell me.

L. Easy. I cannot speak—and I cou'd wish you'd not oblige me to it——'tis the only thing I ever yet refus'd you—and tho' I want reason for my will, let me not answer you.

Sir Char. Your will then be a reason; and since I see you are so generously tender of reproaching me, 'tis fit I shou'd be easy in my gratitude, and make what ought to be my shame, my joy: let me be therefore pleas'd to tell you now, your wondrous conduct has wak'd me to a sense of your disquiet past, and resolution never to disturb it more.—And (not that I offer it as a merit, but yet in blind compliance to my will) let me beg you would immediately discharge your woman.

L. Easy. Alas! I think not of her—O, my dear, distract me not with this excess of goodness. [*Weeping.*]

Sir Char. Nay, praise me not, lest I reflect how little I have deserv'd it—I see you're in pain to give me this confusion—Come, I will not shock your softness by my untimely blush for what is past, but rather sooth you to a pleasure at my sense of joy, for my recover'd happiness to come. Give then to my new-born love,

what name you please, it cannot, shall not be too kind : O ! it cannot be too soft for what my soul swells up with emulation to deserve——Receive me then entire at last, and take what yet no woman ever truly had, my conquer'd heart.

L. Easy. O the soft treasure ! O the dear reward of long desiring love !——Now I am blest indeed to see you kind, without th' expence of pain in being so, to make you mine with easiness. Thus ! thus to have you mine is something more than happiness, 'tis double life, and madness of abounding joy ! But 'twas a pain intolerable to give you a confusion.

Sir Char. O thou engaging virtue ! But I'm too slow in doing justice to thy love : I know thy softness will refuse me ; but remember I insist upon it——let thy woman be discharg'd this minute.

L. Easy. No, my dear, think me not so low in faith to fear that, after what you've said, 'twill ever be in her power to do me future injury : when I can conveniently provide for her, I'll think on't : but to discharge her now, might let her guess at the occasion ; and methinks I wou'd have all our differences, like our endearments, be equally a secret to our servants.

Sir Char. Still my superior every way !——be it as you have better thought.——Well, my dear, now I'll confess a thing that was not in your power to accuse me of : to be short, I own this creature is not the only one I have been to blame with.

L. Easy. I know she is not, and was always less concern'd to find it so, for constancy in errors might have been fatal to me.

Sir Char. What is't you know, my dear ? [*Surpris'd.*]

L. Easy. Come, I am not afraid to accuse you now—my Lady Graveairs—Your carelessness, my dear, let all the world know it ; and it would have been hard indeed, had it been only to me a secret.

Sir Char. My dear, I'll ask no more questions, for fear of being more ridiculous : I do confess, I thought my discretion there had been a master-piece—How contemptible must I have looked all this while ?

L. Easy. You shan't say so.

Sir Char. Well, to let you see I had some shame, as well as nature in me, I had writ this to my Lady Graveairs, upon my first discovering that you knew I had wrong'd you: read it.

L. Easy. [*Reads.*] "Something has happen'd, that prevents the visit I intended you; and I could gladly wish, you never wou'd reproach me if I tell you, 'tis utterly inconvenient that I should ever see you more."

This indeed was more than I had merited.

Enter SERVANT.

Sir Char. Who's there? Here—Step with this to my Lady Graveairs.

[*Seals the letter, and gives it to the Servant.*]

Serv. Yes, Sir—Madam, my Lady Betty's come.

L. Easy. I'll wait on her.

Sir Char. My dear, I'm thinking there may be other things my negligence may have wrong'd you in; but be assur'd, as I discover 'em, all shall be corrected. Is there any part or circumstance in your fortune that I can change, or yet make easier to you?

L. Easy. None, my dear, your good-nature never stinted me in that; and now, methinks, I have less occasion there than ever.

Re-enter SERVANT.

Serv. Sir, my Lord Morelove's come.

Sir Char. I am coming——I think I told you of the design we had laid against Lady Betty.

L. Easy. You did, and I shou'd be pleas'd to be myself concern'd in it.

Sir Char. I believe we may employ you: I know he waits for me with impatience. But, my dear, won't you think me tasteless to the joy you've given me, to suffer at this time any concern but you t'employ my thoughts?

L. Easy. Seasons must be obey'd; and since I know your friend's happiness depending, I cou'd not taste my own. shou'd you neglect it.

Sir Char. Thou easy sweetness!——O! what a waste on thy neglected love has my unthinking brain com-

mitted? but time and future thrift of tenderness shall yet repair it all. The hours will come when this soft gliding stream that swells my heart, uninterrupted shall renew its course——

And like the ocean after ebb, shall move

With constant force of due returning love. [*Exeunt.*]

The SCENE changes to another Room.

And then re-enter Lady EASY and Lady BETTY.

L. Bet. You've been in tears, my dear, and yet you look pleas'd too.

L. Easy. You'll pardon me if I can't let you into circumstances: but be satisfied, Sir Charles has made me happy, ev'n to a pain of joy.

L. Bet. Indeed I'm truly glad of it; tho' I am sorry to find that any one who has generosity enough to do you justice, shou'd unprovok'd be so great an enemy to me.

L. Easy. Sir Charles your enemy!

L. Bet. My dear, you'll pardon me if I always thought him so, but now I am convinc'd of it.

L. Easy. In what, I pray? I can't think you'll find him so.

L. Bet. O! Madam, it has been his whole business of late to make an utter breach between my Lord Morelove and me.

L. Easy. That may be owing to your usage of my Lord: perhaps he thought it wou'd not disoblige you; I am confident you are mistaken in him.

L. Bet. O! I don't use to be out in things of this nature, I can see well enough; but I shall be able to tell you more when I have talk'd with my Lord.

L. Easy. Here he comes; and because you shall talk with him——No excuses——for positively I will leave you together.

L. Bet. Indeed, my dear, I desire you would stay then; for I know you think now, that I have a mind to——to——

L. Easy. To—to—hah! hah! hah! [*Going.*]

L. Bet. Well! remember this.

Enter Lord MORELOVE.

L. Mor. I hope I don't fright you away, Madam?

L. Easy. Not at all, my Lord; but I must beg your pardon for a moment, I'll wait upon you immediately. [*Exit.*

L. Bet. My Lady Easy gone?

L. Mor. Perhaps, Madam, in friendship to you; she thinks I may have deserv'd the coldness you of late have shewn me; and was willing to give you this opportunity to convince me, you have not done it without just grounds and reason.

L. Bet. How handsomely does he reproach me! but I can't bear that he should think I know it—[*Aside.*] my Lord, whatever has pass'd between you and me, I dare swear that could not be her thought at this time; for when two people have appear'd profess'd enemies, she can't but think one will as little care to give, as 'other to receive a justification of their actions.

L. Mor. Passion indeed often does repeated injuries on both sides; but I don't remember in my heat of error I ever yet profess'd myself your enemy.

L. Bet. My Lord, I shall be very free with you—I confess I do think now I have not a greater enemy in the world.

L. Mor. If having long lov'd you to my own disquiet be injurious, I am content then to stand the foremost of your enemies.

L. Bet. O my Lord, there's no great fear of your being my enemy that way, I dare say——

L. Mor. There's no other way my heart can bear to offend you now, and I foresee in that it will persist to my undoing.

L. Bet. Fy, fy, my Lord, we know where your heart is well enough.

L. Mor. My conduct has indeed deserv'd this scorn, and therefore 'tis but just I shou'd submit to your resentment, and beg (tho' I'm assur'd in vain) for pardon.

[*Kneels.*

Enter Sir CHARLES.

Sir Char. How, my Lord! [*L. Mor. rises.*

L. Bet. Ha! he here? This was unlucky. [*Aside.*

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L. Mor. O pity my confusion! [To *L. Bet.*

Sir Char. I am sorry to see you can so soon forget yourself: methinks the insults you have borne from that lady, by this time should have warn'd you into a disgust of her regardless principles.

L. Mor. Hold, Sir Charles! while you and I are friends I desire you would speak with honour of this lady——'Tis sufficient I have no complaint against her, and——

L. Bet. My Lord, I beg you wou'd resent this thing no farther: an injury like this is better punish'd with our contempt; apparent malice should only be laugh'd at.

Sir Char. Ha! ha! the old recourse! Offers of any hopes to delude him from his resentment; and then, as the grand monarch did with Cavalier, you are sure to keep your word with him.

L. Bet. Sir Charles, to let you know how far I am above your little spleen, my Lord, your hand from this hour——

Sir Char. Pshaw! pshaw! All design! all pique! mere artifice and disappointed woman.

L. Bet. Look you, Sir, not that I doubt my Lord's opinion of me; yet——

Sir Char. Look you, Madam, in short, your word has been too often taken to let you make up quarrels, as you used to do, with a soft look, and a fair promise you never intended to keep.

L. Bet. Was ever such an insolence! he won't give me leave to speak.

L. Mor. Sir Charles!

L. Bet. No, pray, my Lord, have patience; and since his malice seems to grow particular, I dare his worst, and urge him to the proof on't: pray, Sir, wherein can you charge me with breach of promise to my Lord?

Sir Char. Death! you won't deny it? How often, to piece up a quarrel, have you appointed him to visit you alone; and tho' you have promis'd to see no other company the whole day, when he was come he has found you among the laugh of noisy fops, coquets, and coxcombs, dissolutely gay, while your full eyes ran

o'er with transport of their flattery, and your own vain power of pleasing? How often, I say, have you been known to throw away, at least, four hours of your good humour upon such wretches; and the minute they were gone, grew only dull to him, sunk into a distasteful spleen, complain'd you had talk'd yourself into the headach, and then indulg'd upon the dear delight of seeing him in pain: and by that time you had stretch'd and gap'd him heartily out of patience, of a sudden most importantly remember you had out-sat your appointment with my Lady Fiddle-faddle; and immediately order your coach to the park.

L. Bet. Yet, Sir, have you done?

Sir Char. No——though this might serve to shew the nature of your principles: but the noble conquest you have gain'd at last over defeated sense of reputation too, has made your fame immortal.

L. Mor. How, Sir?

L. Bet. My reputation?

Sir Char. Ay, Madam, your reputation—My Lord, if I advance a falsehood, then resent it—I say, your reputation——It has been your life's whole pride of late, to be the common toast of every public table, vain even in the infamous addresses of a married man, my Lord Foppington; let that be reconcil'd with reputation, I'll now shake hands with shame, and bow me to the low contempt which you deserve from him; not but I suppose you'll yet endeavour to recover him. Now you find ill usage in danger of losing your conquest, 'tis possible you'll stop at nothing to preserve it.

L. Bet. Sir Charles——
[*Walks disorder'd, and he after her.*]

Sir Char. I know your vanity is so voracious, 'twill ev'n wound itself to feed itself; offer him a blank, perhaps, to fill up with hopes of what nature he pleases; and part even with your pride to keep him.

L. Bet. Sir Charles, I have not deserv'd this of you.
[*Bursting into tears.*]

Sir Char. Ah! true woman, drop him a soft dissembling tear, and then his just resentment must be bush'd of course.

L. Mor. O Charles! I can bear no more, those tears are too reproaching.

Sir Char. Hilt for your life! [*Aside, and then aloud.*] My Lord, if you believe her, you're undone; the very next sight of my Lord Foppington would make her yet forswear all that she can promise.

L. Bet. My Lord Foppington! Is that the mighty crime that must condemn me then? You know I us'd him but as a tool of my resentment, which you yourself, by a pretended friendship to us both, most artfully provok'd me to —

L. Mor. Hold, I conjure you, Madam, I want not this conviction.

L. B. t. Send for him this minute, and you and he shall both be witnesses of the contempt and dereliction I have for any forward hopes his vanity may have given him, or your malice would insinuate.

Sir Char. Death! you would as soon eat fire, as soon part with your luxurious taste of folly, as dare to own the half of this before his face, or any one that would make you blush to deny it to. — Here comes my wife; now we shall see — Ha! and my Lord Foppington with her — Now! now we shall see this mighty proof of your sincerity — — Now! my Lord, you'll have a warning sure, and henceforth know me for your friend indeed —

Enter Lady EASY and Lord FOPPINGTON.

L. Easy. In tears, my dear! what's the matter?

L. Bet. O, my dear, all I told you's true; Sir Charles has shewn himself so inveterably my enemy, that, if I believ'd I deserv'd but half his hate, 'twould make me hate myself.

L. Fop. Hark you, Charles, prythee what is this business?

Sir Char. Why, yours, my Lord, for ought I know — I have made such a breach betwixt 'em — I can't promise much for the courage of a woman; but if hers holds, I am sure it's wide enough, you may enter ten a-breast, my Lord.

L. Fop. Say'st thou so, Charles? then I hold six to four I am the first man in the town.

L. Easy. Sure there must be some mistake in this; I hope he has not made my Lord your enemy.

L. Bet. I know not what he has done.

L. Mor. Far be that thought! Alas! I am too much in fear myself, that what I have this day committed, advis'd by his mistaken friendship, may have done my love irreparable prejudice.

L. Bet. No, my Lord, since I perceive his little arts have not prevail'd upon your good-nature to my prejudice, I am bound in gratitude, in duty to myself, and to the confession you have made, my Lord, to acknowledge now, I have been to blame too.

L. Mor. Ha! is't possible, can you own so much? O my transported heart!

L. Bet. He says I have taken pleasure in seeing you uneasy—I own it—but 'twas when that uneasiness I thought proceeded from your love; and if you did love, 'twill not be much to pardon it.

L. Mor. O let my soul thus bending to your power, adore this soft descending goodness.

L. Bet. And since the giddy woman's flights I have shewn you too often have been public, 'tis fit at last the amends and reparation should be so: therefore what I offer'd to Sir Charles, I now repeat before this company, my utter detestation of any past or future gallantry, that has or shall be offered by me to your uneasiness.

L. Mor. O be less generous, or teach me to deserve it—Now blush, Sir Charles, at your injurious accusation.

L. Fop. Hah! *Pardi, voila quelque chose d'extraordinaire.* [Aside.

L. Bet. As for my Lord Foppington, I owe him thanks for having been so friendly an instrument of our reconciliation; for though in the little outward gallantry I received from him, I did not immediately trust him with my design in it, yet I have a better opinion of his understanding, than to suppose he could mistake it.

L. Fop. I am struck dumb with the deliberation of

her assurance; and do not positively remember, that the *unchallenge* of my temper ever had so bright an occasion to shew itself before.

L. Bet. My Lord, I hope you'll pardon the freedom I have taken with you.

L. Fop. O, Madam, don't be under the confusion of an apology upon my account; for in cases of this nature, I am never disappointed, but when I find a lady of the same mind two hours together.—Madam, I have lost a thousand fine women in my time; but never had the ill manners to be out of humour with any one for refusing me, since I was born.

L. Bet. My Lord, that's a very prudent temper.

L. Fop. Madam, to convince you that I am in an universal peace with mankind, since you own I have so far contributed to your happiness, give me leave to have the honour of compleating it, by joining your hand where you have already offer'd up your inclination.

L. Bet. My Lord, that's a favour I can't refuse you.

L. Mor. Generous indeed, my Lord.

[*L. Fop. joins their hands.*]

L. Fop. And stop my breath, if ever I was better pleas'd since my first entrance into human nature.

Sir Char. How now, my Lord! what! throw up the cards before you have lost the game?

L. Fop. Look you, Charles, 'tis true, I did design to have play'd with her alone; but he that will keep well with the ladies, must sometimes be content to make one at a poole with 'em: and since I know I must engage her in my turn, I don't see any great odds in letting him take the first game with her.

Sir Char. Wisely consider'd, my Lord.

L. Bet. And now, Sir Charles——

Sir Char. And now, Madam, I'll save you the trouble of a long speech; and, in one word, confess that every thing I have done in regard to you this day was purely artificial.—I saw there was no way to secure you to my Lord Morelove, but by alarming your pride with the danger of losing him: and since the success must have by this time convinc'd you, that in love nothing is more ridiculous than an over-acted aversion; I

am sure you won't take it ill, if we at last congratulate your good nature, by heartily laughing at the fright we had put you in Ha! ha! ha!

L. Easy. Ha! ha! ha!

L. Bet. Why—well, I declare it now, I hate you worse than ever.

Sir Char. Ha! ha! ha! And was it afraid they would take away its love from it!—Poor Lady Betty! ha! ha!

L. Easy. My dear, I beg your pardon, but 'tis impossible not to laugh when one's so heartily pleas'd.

L. Fop. Really, Madam, I am afraid the humour of the company will draw me into your displeasure too; but if I were to expire this moment, my last breath would positively go out with a laugh. Ha! ha! ha!

L. Bet. Nay, I have deserv'd it all, that's the truth on't—but I hope, my Lord, you were not in this design against me.

L. Mor. As a proof, Madam, I am inclin'd never to deceive you more,—I do confess I had my share in't.

L. Bet. You do, my Lord—then I declare 'twas a design, one or other—the best carried on, that ever I knew in my life; and (to my shame own it) for ought I know, the only thing that could have prevail'd upon my temper: 'twas a foolish pride that has cost me many a bitten lip to support it—I wish we don't both repent, my Lord.

L. Mor. Don't you repent without me, and we never shall.

Sir Char. Well, Madam, now the worst that the world can say of your past conduct, is that my Lord had constancy, and you have try'd it.

Enter a Servant to Lord MORELOVE.

Serv. My Lord, Mr Le Fevre's below, and desires to know what time your Lordship will please to have the music begin.

L. Mor. Sir Charles, what say you? will you give me leave to bring 'em hither?

Sir Char. As the ladies think fit, my Lord.

L. Bet. O! by all means, 'twill be better here, unless we cou'd have the terras to ourselves,

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L. Mor. Then, pray, desire 'em to come all hither immediately.

Serv. Yes, my Lord.

[*Exit Serv.*]

Enter Lady GRAVEAIRS.

Sir Char. Lady Graveairs!

L. Grave. Ye! you may well start! but don't suppose I am now come like a poor tame fool to upbraid your guilt: but, if I cou'd, to blast you with a look.

Sir Char. Come, come, you have sense,—don't expose yourself:—you are unhappy, and I own myself the cause,—the only satisfaction I can offer you, is to protest no new engagement takes me from you, but a sincere reflection of the long neglect and injuries I've done the best of wives; for whose amends and only sake I now must part with you, and all the inconvenient pleasures of my life.

L. Grave. Have you then fallen into the low contempt of exposing me, and to your wife too?

Sir Char. 'Twas impossible, without it, I could ever be sincere in my conversion.

L. Grave. Despicable!

Sir Char. Do not think so—for my sake, I know, she'll not reproach you—nor, by her carriage, ever let the world perceive you've wrong'd her.—My dear—

L. Easy. Lady Graveairs, I hope you'll sup with us?

L. Grave. I can't refuse so much good company, Madam.

Sir Char. You see the worst of her resentment.—In the mean time, don't endeavour to be her friend, and she'll never be your enemy.

L. Grave. I am unfortunate—'tis what my folly has deserv'd, and I submit to it.

L. Mor. So! here's the music.

L. Easy. Come, Ladies, shall we sit?

After the Music, A SONG.

SABINA, *with an angel's face,*

By love ordain'd for joy,

Seems of the Sirens' cruel race,

To charm and then destroy.

*With all the arts of look and dress,
 She fans the fatal fire;
 Through pride, mistaken oft for grace,
 She bids the swain expire.*

*The god of Love, enrag'd to see
 The nymph defy his flame,
 Pronounc'd his merciless decrees
 Against the haughty dame;*

*"Let age with double speed o'ertake her,
 Let love the room of pride supply,
 And when the lovers all forsake her,
 A spotless virgin let her die."*

Sir Charles comes forward with Lady Easy.

Sir Char. Now, my dear, I find my happiness grow fast upon me. In all my past experience of the sex, I found even among the better sort so much of folly, pride, malice, passion, and irresolute desire, that I concluded thee but of the foremost rank, and therefore scarce worthy my concern; but thou hast stirr'd me with so severe a proof of thy exalted virtue, it gives me wonder equal to my love.—If then the unkindly thought of what I have been, hereafter should intrude upon thy growing quiet, let this reflection teach thee to be easy:

*Thy wrongs, when greatest, most thy virtue prov'd;
 And from that virtue found, I blus'd and truly lov'd.*

[Exeunt.]*

* This comedy contains, perhaps, the most elegant dialogue, and the most perfect knowledge of the manners of persons in real high life, extant in any dramatic piece that has yet appeared in any language whatever. Nor was ever poetical justice more strictly observed than in this play: every error finds its punishment in proportion; and singular virtue is singularly rewarded. The excellent moral, together with the happy choice of characters, natural and genteel diction, and that spirit of gaiety which runs through the whole, will undoubtedly maintain the reputation this piece has so justly acquired, as long as theatrical representations shall exist.

EPILOGUE.

CONQUEST and freedom are at length our own;
 False fears of slavery now no more are shewn;
 Nor dread of paying tribute to a foreign throne.
 All stations now the fruits of conquest share,
 Except (if small with great things may compare)
 Th' oppress'd condition of the lab'ring player.
 We're still in fears (as you of late from France)
 Of the despotic power of song and dance:
 For while subscription, like a tyrant, reigns,
 Nature's neglected and the Stoge in chains,
 And English actors slaves to swell the Frenchman's gains.
 Like Æsop's crow, the poor out-witted stage,
 That liv'd on wholesome plays i' th' latter age,
 Deluded once to sing, ev'n justly serv'd,
 Let fall her cheese to th' fox's mouth, and starv'd.
 O that your judgment (as your courage has
 Your fame extended) wou'd assert our cause;
 That nothing English might submit to foreign laws.
 If we but live to see that joyful day,
 Then of the English stage reviv'd we may,
 As of your honour now, with proper application, say.
 So when the Gallic fox, by fraud of peace,
 Had lull'd the British lion i. to ease,
 And saw that sleep compos'd his couchant head,
 He bids him wake, and see himself betray'd
 In toils of treach'rous politics around him laid:
 Shews him how one cl'e hour of Gallic thought
 Retook those towns for which he years had fought.

*At this the indignant savage rows his fiery eyes,
 Dauntless, tho' blushing at the base surprise,
 Pauses a while—but finds delays are vain :
 Compell'd to fight, he shakes his shaggy main;
 He grinds his dreadful fangs, and stalks to Blenheim plain.
 There with erected crest, and horrid roar,
 He furious, plunges on through streams of gore,
 And dyes with false Bavarian blood the purple Danube's shore;
 In one pitch'd battle frees the destin'd slaves,
 Revives old English honour, and an empire saves.*

END OF THE CARELESS HUSBAND.

